

RED DAMASK

A Story of Nurture and Nature

By

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RED DAMASK

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First Edition

B - B

To

My Mother and My Mother-in-law

Author's Note:

*No character in this book is based
on a person in real life.*

EMANIE SACHS

RED DAMASK



Chapter One

ABBY wanted to be good. She had been taught that being good meant obeying your parents, living up to family traditions, having high standards and living up to them. Right was right, and wrong was wrong. In doubt, your conscience would tell you what to do. Hahls and Wendels rarely were in doubt, but a conscience was a precaution; and precautions were right, too.

Abby's father was a Hahl, and her mother was a Wendel. Both families said they had succeeded through diligence and character. They didn't need religion.

Without religion, Grandfather Hahl, sent to America from Nuremburg in '48 when the family banking house was reduced by the German revolution, created Philip Hahl & Company, that large department store on Twenty-third street in New York. Without religion, Philip Hahl, Junior (Abby's father), gave the store his passionate devotion. He called it "building up the business for his son." His brother-in-law, Cyrus Hardenburg, an eminent consulting engineer, became an eminent philanthropist also. Another brother-in-law, Elias Wendel, became a New York State Supreme Court judge. (He belonged to the synagogue.)

RED DAMASK

The women of both families, known to be fine wives and mothers, were absorbed in the welfare of their homes.

Any need for ritualism was filled by a family life which observed birthdays and anniversaries as if they were holy days, and family traditions as if they were commandments. Grandfather Hahl, since the death of the older Wendels, was the center of both family groups, and since Grandmother's death, the home of Philip Hahl, Junior, where he lived, was the altar for family devotions—an altar upholstered literally in silken damasks, upholstered figuratively in idealistic phrases, equally luxurious.

For Abby tried to live up to them. Religious fervor, inherited from rabbinical ancestors, made her want to be good for the sake of being good. Denied its mystic outlet, it put emotion into her conduct; it flowed into dreams and ideals. Fighting her energy, fighting her brain, sometimes it betrayed them; sometimes it was betrayed.

Abby was slender, not very tall. Her heart-shaped face was charming with its thin crisp nose and full pink lips, its round mustard-colored eyes, oddly attractive when intensity turned them topaz. She never had lacked partners at dancing school, and on St. Valentine's day the postman staggered up the Hahls' high stoop.

But she wouldn't wear Gilbert Ware's school pin, though his family and hers always had been friends. She snubbed any boy who tried to flirt with her. Flirtation was wrong. And she was in love with an ambition and a dream.

She wanted to be a great architect, to build shining towers and turrets, fairy palaces, ideally perfect, strong as her own fervor. And she wanted to marry an ideal knight, like Sir Galahad and Richard Mansfield and Stevenson and Sir Moses Montefiore, the philanthropist. Every night before she slept she dreamed her-

RED DAMASK

self alone with this compound of perfection, alone on a desert island or alone in a bungalow covered with rose vines. How could commonplace boys interest her when such a vision filled her mind?

At sixteen, with her cousins and the daughters of her parents' friends, Abby was still at Mrs. Conrad's School for Girls. Mrs. Conrad hoped the graduates would go to Krell College, her own *alma mater*, but parents preferred débuts in Sherry's ballroom for their daughters.

Now, in 1905, none but Marina Hardenburg, Abby's cousin, and Donna Pirez, Abby's friend, had gone to Krell from Mrs. Conrad's.

To pass the entrance examinations, Donna memorized the first and last of her textbooks and wrote Mother Goose rhymes between. She told Abby about it during the overture at an Easter holiday matinée, and Abby was shocked.

"If there weren't something cute about you, you'd be a prig," said Donna. "It's the examiners' fault if they don't read through the papers. I didn't want to go to college, but no blushing bride wants a grown daughter around. That's the inside fact, if you really want to know why Donna Pirez went to college when her widowed mother married your uncle's brother."

"And made us related," said Abby.

This relationship stopped Mother's opposing their friendship. When Donna came to the school from Harville, Tennessee, Mother said she was different, she was flippant; Portuguese Jews "thought they were better than anybody else," and Donna was of Portuguese stock. Why should Abby go outside the family for companionship, anyway? But as Dr. Hardenburg's stepdaughter Donna immediately became acceptable to Hahls and Wendels.

However, it had taken more than Donna's acceptability to get Abby, who went nowhere without a chaperon, to this matinée

RED DAMASK

without one. It had taken the unexpected arrival of the woman who restuffed Mother's pillows, the previous engagement of all the aunts, and Abby's old Fräulein's illness. "I can dispose of the extra ticket," said Mother, "and it's a shame to waste the other two. It won't hurt you, this once. And a historical play is instructive."

The play was "Nancy Stair." As soon as the curtain went down on the first act, Donna asked if Abby still wanted to go to College.

"Don't I! I haven't said a word at home, though Mrs. Conrad says we have to decide. Karl had a terrible row this morning about going to Johns Hopkins next year to study medicine. Father says he must go into the store. I do think it's hard on parents to raise children and not have them do what you think they ought to!"

Donna leveled her opera glasses on the left stage box. "How would they take the idea of your being an architect? Have you still got that wild notion?"

"Uh-huh. Nobody knows about it but Mr. Heron at school. And Uncle Stanley. He's always taking me to see buildings. . . . Oh, Donna, I'd rather build wonderful things than do anything in the world!"

"Rather than get married, Miss Man-hater?"

Abby's dream was too sacred to tell. Instead, she raved about Ruskin. "I just adore his books, Donna. What he says about Gothic cathedrals is so . . . Donna! Those two boys in that stage box are trying to flirt with you!"

"You slander them, darling. The woman started it."

"Donna!"

"Oh, they're all right. I saw their pins through the opera glass. They're Dekes from Amherst. See their Amherst hat-

RED DAMASK

bands? They're going to work in a cigarette before the curtain goes up, I reckon."

"But . . ."

Then Abby gasped and Donnā smiled when the boys took adjoining seats that two elderly women had vacated.

"I have got a screw loose!" exclaimed the cool blond youth. He held out his hand to Donna. "How could I have forgotten you!"

"I wondered how, when we are such old friends tried and true. This is Miss Hahl—Mr. . . . Now how can I have forgotten your name? I am a pinhead. That's why mother sent me to Krell."

"That's great—that you're at Krell, I mean. We're at Amherst. My name is Hunter Latimer and this is Bill Peters."

Bill grinned.

"How do you do," said Abby, stiffly.

"How do you like the show?" asked Bill.

Donna and Hunter Latimer began to chat about Amherst baseball stars and the recent automobile parade.

Abby was silent. And then: "It's a very nice play," she said in a hollow voice.

She was glad when the elderly women returned.

"See you later," Hunter Latimer told Donna.

The curtain went up.

"Donna! How can you!" whispered Abby.

One of the elderly women glared at her.

Abby lost herself in Nancy Stair's troubles. One of her suitors was shot and the other accused of the murder; nobody but Nancy could clear him.

During the next intermission the elderly women stayed in their seats and Abby said flirting was dreadful.

RED DAMASK

"Oh, not if it's prettily done, Abby. What's the harm in funning about?"

"But, Donna, it's wrong. You've got to have standards."

"Say that to the stars sometimes, and it'll sound like a sniff in a thunderstorm. Astronomy is lots of fun, and it sort of shows you how much you matter. Our astronomy prof is a perfect duck. . . ."

The curtain went up.

Abby tried to excuse Donna's flippancy. Donna had been brought up in the obscure South. Her father was dead. Until her mother married Dr. Hardenburg they had been poor. Donna wasn't pretty, either. Abby's brother Karl, who disliked her, said she looked like a performing terrier in a variety show with her big black eyes and little turned-up nose. But unlike Abby's cousins and other friends she could forget herself and enter into your thoughts. Somehow, though she fitted none of Abby's precepts, she was lovable.

On the way out of the theater the Amherst boys stopped them.

"You girls are coming over to the Holland House for tea," said Hunter Latimer.

"Oh no! We couldn't!" exclaimed Abby.

"Why not?" said Donna.

"Why . . . why . . . Albert is coming for us. He must be waiting now!"

"But I always need tea after a murder," said Donna, plainly. "Must I leave you, Abby?"

Abby wanted to say: "You know I'm not allowed to go to restaurants! I'm not out! And we've never even been introduced to these boys, and to go with them, and to a restaurant without a chaperon! And Albert waiting with the horses! But, Donna, how can I desert you?"

She couldn't. So she said, grimly: "I'll go. Come on."

RED DAMASK

They walked over to Fifth Avenue and down to the Holland House. Abby worried about Albert and the horses and what Mother would think, and hated Bill Peters because he had hair like Watt's Sir Galahad and such an attractive grin. She mustn't like him! He talked politely about football and baseball and the weather. She "Yes-ed," and "No-ed" gloomily, feeling she'd be guiltier if she enjoyed this sacrifice for Donna's morals. In the restaurant she ordered lemonade because she disliked it.

Donna and Hunter Latimer were talking about a Krell girl whose brother was at Amherst.

"I'm sorry she flunked out," said he.

"Dosie had a hard winter. She was engaged to two men down in Elton, Alabama. And she got us to write her love letters for her. They were wonderful. We sort of mixed Marie Corelli and Shakespeare. Dosie copied them and sent one each to George and Tom. She's a sweet child and she didn't want to make us write too many. But George and Tom were friends and neither knew the other was a *fiancé*."

"Ping-pong! Miss Hahl, won't you have a cake?"

"No, thank you," said Abby in a tragic tone.

"Well," Donna went on, "George told Tom that Dosie was getting literary and showed her last letter to prove it. . . . I'd love another one of those cakes."

"And that busted the trust?"

"They sent Dosie a telegram: 'Gone but not forgetting. George and Tom.'"

The boys laughed.

Abby sighed.

Four women seized the next table and the attention of the dining room. They glittered with breastpins and chains, and waved feather boas and feathered hats. They had olive skins

RED DAMASK

and long noses and huge busts, and loud complaints about the prices on the bill of fare.

"The Hebrews are upon us," said Hunter Latimer.

Blood pounded in Abby's ears. You always got punished when you did wrong! And Mother said you risked rebuffs and embarrassments with Gentiles!

But Donna grinned.

"That's the lost tribe," she said. "Now, I'm a great-great-granddaughter of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*. And Abby here is descended straight from Moses, the lawgiver. He's got her by the whiskers pat."

Bill Peters' laugh was a bray.

"Must your friend do that?" Donna frowned gently.

"On the level, that's a good one! Must your friend do that? Hey, Bill? I say, Miss Pirez, have you an engagement for the Commencement cotillion? I'll make old Bill take my sister."

On the way out, Abby thought she saw Aunt Aurelia Hahl's automobile hat, but she didn't investigate.

Albert was waiting at the theater when Donna and Abby got back.

"Your mother doesn't like the horses kept waiting, Miss Abby," he grumbled, tucking in the imported carriage robe.

On rubber tires they bowled smoothly over to Fifth Avenue, where bay windows on brownstone mansions turned rose and orange in the late afternoon sun.

"Donna," said Abby, "didn't you feel terrible when that boy said that about Hebrews?"

"Not at all. Most likely my family were scholars in Portugal when his came over as peasants in the *Mayflower*. Honestly, Abby, sometimes I think some of those people must have come over as insects in that little boat. It's the only way there would

RED DAMASK

have been room! Anyway, I'm no more responsible for that crowd of common Jews than he is for that cockney waiter we had, who was a Gentile and still no marvel of refinement. Sweet Heaven! We haven't had any money since my grandfather lost it in the Civil War, and if Mother hadn't married one of you prosperous German Jews we'd have gone on managing to live on nothing a year. I guess we've gotten lazy. Worn-out stock. But I have got the feeling that my ancestors are as good as anybody's and that feeling is about all they're good for! You're just worried because you think we've been wicked. Poor little Abby! I made you eat the apple and you wouldn't even enjoy it!"

Abby found Aunt Sophie Wendel presiding at Mother's bedside. Mother's heroic digestion had succumbed to three portions of goose liver, dared at Aunt Aurelia's the night before. It always succumbed to three portions of goose liver, but Mother would say, "I'm just going to try and see if this really makes me sick." She couldn't believe that it did. She didn't want to believe it. This was her occasional adventure.

She looked like a giant doll, with a sandy auburn plait falling over each shoulder. Her challie dressing sacque, her flat round eyes, and the quilted satin comforter which covered her long angular body were the same baby blue.

Aunt Sophie heaved reproaches at that prostrate form.

She herself was fond of strawberries, but they gave her a rash. Did she eat them? No! She could resist temptation. Some women dieted to keep their figures, losing their strength. She had no vanity! In fact, she had no faults. She was a Spartan mother. Her five wonderful children should live up to her ambitions for them; should be worthy of their father, the Judge. No pity ever softened her. She had none when it clashed with pride. She was proud of the judiciary, so superior to mere business. (An income from stock in Philip Hahl & Company

RED DAMASK

was no less than its due.) She was proud of having religion. (She ignored its political uses.)

"I thought I ought to come here, Erna. But I had planned to go and call on the wife of the new German consul-general. A wonderful woman, Erna!" Like Aunt Sophie, the celebrities known to her judiciary always were wonderful.

Then Abby came in and Mother looked at the cuckoo clock on the blue satin wall.

"Why, Abby!" she said. "It's eight minutes to six. Isn't it late for the *matinée* to be out? Where have you been?"

Erna Hahl had to know her children's whens and wheres; she never knew nor cared to know their hopes and fears. Her intelligence was perfunctory, her emotions shallow. But she was stubborn and serene. When Abby and Karl were babies she had handled them deftly; then her slow calm certainty had soothed. It wasn't helpful now. But she was a wife and mother and therefore a fine character. Without this moral satisfaction, which she shared with all the family, she might have been lonely, for even Grandfather Hahl, who shared her values, could get from music a rapture she could not understand. Father adored his business; she fought it with the cuckoo clock. If it made him late for dinner, she sulked virtuously. Karl, in constant irritation because he had a flare for science and a family trying to quench it, she sometimes appeased. He was her beloved son. (His will was stronger than hers.) Her sisters admired and patronized her. She ruled Abby through Abby's sense of duty.

Now Abby reproached herself for not being at Mother's sick bed. But Mother must be spared. Abby, who preferred punishment to guilt, renounced the comfort of confession.

"What does Doctor Hardenburg say?" she asked. "Do you feel very badly, Mother dear?"

Mother recited everything but the goose livers.

RED DAMASK

Aunt Sophie felt it her duty to mention them, but she added, "I don't think Aurelia ought to serve goose livers so late in the season."

"Goose livers don't really hurt me. It was something else."

Aunt Sophie arched her eyebrows. Then: "I will admit, Erna, that Aurelia is a little careless about such things. Of course she's a fine woman."

The family criticized Aurelia, George Hahl's wife. Liveliness and cheer made her popular. The family called her worldly. She indulged her children, and, as they were neither naturally brilliant nor spurred to effort by conflicts, they often failed to pass at school. The family said Aurelia spoiled them. Her daughter Rose, a beauty, was a belle at seventeen. The family called her frivolous. When George Hahl bought an automobile the family said that horses were good enough for them and that Aurelia was extravagant. George, the younger partner in Philip Hahl & Company, had no right to have the larger expense account. And Philip and Erna believed in living simply.

Aunt Sophie arched her eyebrows and dilated her nose as Hilda, the waitress, escorted Aunt Aurelia to the bedside, for Aunt Aurelia was wearing an automobile coat and an automobile veil.

"Olive and Helen have been here and gone home to their families, and I have been with Erna since five o'clock. You can't make such time when you have an automobile, I suppose," said Aunt Sophie, sarcastically.

Aunt Aurelia had no malice and suspected none. She had no answers and gave none. She was a plump, birdlike little woman with crisp brown hair and fresh pink skin. Donna Pirez called her "Jenny Wren."

"I was at tea at the Holland House with Mrs. Ware, and as soon as I got home George told me that Philip said that Erna

RED DAMASK

wasn't so well and I came right over. Abby, didn't I see you at the Holland House?" she chirped, for she acquired conversation from asking questions and repeating replies.

"You didn't see my Abby, Aurelia. I don't allow Abby to go to restaurants," said Mother.

The family regretted that Aurelia's Rose went to them.

"What do you think of that! Abby, have you got a double? I was sure of that brown silk coat of yours!"

Abby, slim in tan taffeta, her shoulders winged with puffs and lace, looked like a small butterfly, her round mustard-colored eyes wide, her mouth quivering with intensity, not fear. She wouldn't lie outright.

"I was there," she said, bravely.

Mastodons stunned by a butterfly, the aunts stared at her. For Aunt Sophie was enormous. She billowed even in broadcloth, and Aunt Aurelia was a mass of flounces and automobile veils. Mother's great length writhed under blue satin.

"Why, Abby! With your mother sick in bed!" she said.

Aunt Aurelia wanted to know more, and Aunt Sophie said her wonderful girls never had given her a moment's uneasiness.

Grandfather came in from his skat game at the club, to say that Father had stayed at the store to confer with a real-estate agent. Philip Hahl & Company planned to move above Twenty-third Street, a move that involved dangerous decisions.

But such defiance of the cuckoo clock, added to the goose livers and Abby's iniquity, was too much for Mother. "Tressa will be so upset," she whimpered. "She is making fricasseed chicken the way Father likes it. And pancakes. And the doctor says I mustn't have anything but some broth and an egg boiled two minutes and a half with no butter on it!"

"Abby and Karl and I will do our duty by the chicken, Erna. Philip telephoned the doctor before he said he would stay down,

RED DAMASK

and the doctor said it was nothing serious. Nothing serious," said Grandfather happily.

This was no comfort. Hurt by the doctor's depreciation, Mother revenged herself on Abby. Though she usually protected her children from her men, she told what Abby had done.

"Latimer? That's a well-known name," said Grandfather. "Is that the Latimer that lives in Gramercy Park? A very old family. Very old family."

"Young girls should be carefully guarded," said Aunt Sophie, severely. "When Elias met Doctor Osler, he agreed with Elias that the home was the foundation of society. Doctor Osler is a fine man," she added, complacently.

Aunt Aurelia patted Abby's shoulder. And still, instead of reproving Abby, Grandfather harped on the Latimer family.

On their way home, the aunts agreed that Grandfather was getting old. Often they reminded him of this, for often he forgot it. He had wanted to go to the Melba concert that evening, though he had been playing skät at Mr. Kenheim's all afternoon. He was not tired; he had won twelve dollars in a careful game. He wouldn't cheat at cards. That was wrong. But golf, merely a pleasant way of getting exercise, was different. If he made an excellent drive and the ball landed in the rough, he would surreptitiously kick it into the fairway. He had made a straight shot. His intentions were right. He would not be penalized because the rough happened to be in his way. But he was scrupulously honest in business. That was business. Cheating there would have violated what he called the "moral law" within him. He had life arranged in an orderly *Weltanschauung*, a pattern, decorated prettily with idealistic German phrases. Beauty and nobility filled the home. He would see no contention there. And what he willed to see, he saw. Philanthropy was a duty; family solidarity a necessity. He wouldn't admit that his younger son,

RED DAMASK

George Hahl, was stupid nor that he was less useful than a nicely painted wax dummy at the store. George had to be a partner there. Nor would he admit that there his capital enforced his will. It fitted the "moral law within him" to see his two sons partners because of their brotherly feeling. He had everything arranged and labeled. Travel was a refreshing habit; music was a rapture. Now he was annoyed that it was too late to get a ticket to hear Melba.

And Mother was too tired to tell him that he was too tired to go.

She was tired from a long afternoon with her sisters, from the pain of Father's defiance and Tressa's probabilities thereof, and from the humiliation of Abby's iniquity. (The humiliation before her sisters was more painful than the iniquity.) She didn't know how to punish for it. How do you punish a sixteen-year-old girl?

And her digestion began to recover. She was hungry. But no deity offering roast duck—her favorite morsel—could tempt her to disobey the doctor. (Your body, like your house, was to be cared for; the doctor was its deity.)

A tired, wilted mastodon, she was childlike with her auburn braids disheveled; appealing with her blue eyes turning pink from unshed tears.

"It's seven o'clock." She dragged her head up to see the cuckoo clock. "Don't tell me Karl isn't home yet."

"There . . . there . . ." crooned Abby, kneeling by the bed to stroke her forehead. "He'd come up if he knew you were sick," she quibbled, though she hated quibbling.

Erna relaxed under the stroking. Her eyelids closed.

"And to think, Abby, that I can't trust you."

She dozed.

But Abby wept.

RED DAMASK

Karl wasn't home.

He was putting too much fizz and too little chocolate in the first ice-cream soda he mixed in Schneider's drug store on Second Avenue, near the Adams Hospital.

He had spent the afternoon with a friend who was a first-year medical student at Adams University and everything he saw in the laboratory tapped that live wire, his curiosity. A section of liver under the microscope revealed a mosaic of cells with radiating lines like a tessellated pavement, exciting to behold. Not knowing how those lines were stained maddened Karl. Everything was short-circuited for him by his ignorance of fundamentals and techniques. He was a senior at Yale now, bound for Europe next year to study mercantile methods in France, to study banking in England and Germany for his economic background. Since his twelfth birthday he had wanted to be a naturalist.

To save him from vanity, Mother had told him how ugly he was. Nobody but his mother could love "such a donkey." And his skin had been bad, his limbs ungainly. Deeply hurt, he forgot them in a passionate curiosity about things that couldn't see him. To save him from reading "dime novels," Grandfather gave him a microscope, a poor one. Under it, objects had prismatic rings of light. Badly focused, they moved oddly, vividly colored, fascinating.

Karl would collect small bottles of water, surreptitiously, from lakes in Central Park, pouring it afterward into empty bottles through tubes he made of muslin. The water seeped through and left minute forms of vegetable and animal life for him to examine. Disdainful, he would stand, watching people riding in boats on the swan pool. It tickled his vanity to know what they didn't know—that there was a valuable and delicious animal-

RED DAMASK

cule in that pool, Cyclops, one-eyed, nonexistent elsewhere in the Park.

But in 1905 being a naturalist meant writing about nature like Thoreau and Burroughs, which Karl couldn't do, or stuffing and tabulating animals for museums, which he would not do. Biology was chiefly metaphysical. It bewildered Karl to speculate why fish had fins.

It bewildered Karl to speculate about anything. His mind built fact on fact, and his imagination followed it and expanded them. He couldn't argue with the family. By a process of elimination he had decided on medicine. If Father wouldn't send him to the Johns Hopkins, he'd send himself.

He answered the first "Boy Wanted" sign he saw.

Karl's personal plans never fired his imagination, which needed sparks from outside, but a decision, once made, had its own impetus and was its own imperative. He couldn't change his mind, if he wanted to.

And any means of earning money was satisfactory.

At seven-thirty he ate some chocolate and an orange and remembered to telephone home from Schneider's drug store.

Hilda called Grandfather to the phone.

Grandfather talked so fast that he couldn't hear Karl.

"Abby, come here and find out what's wrong with Karl. With Karl!" he called.

Abby listened. She begged Karl to come home, and he hung up the receiver.

It took five minutes to make Grandfather understand where Karl was. Then Grandfather telephoned Father.

"Tell that young gentleman to come home at once or not at all!" shouted Father. "I might as well tell you we're getting closer on that figure. Don't mention it to anybody. Thirty-sixth Street. Ghent is talking one-four. I offered a million. He said

RED DAMASK

we were too far apart to discuss it. I've got Hendrickson down here now. I guess we'll meet at close to one and a quarter."

"But Karl . . ."

"This is no time to bother with a boy's whims. I'd like to give him a good whipping. . . . All right. I'm coming, Hendrickson." And Father rang off.

"What will we do, Abby?" groaned Grandfather.

"We'll go right after him and bring him home!" To be righteously indignant at Karl took Abby's mind off her own troubles. "With Mother sick, too! Oh, he can't act like this," added Abby.

"Second Avenue. A terrible street. How will we get there? We can't take Albert out again tonight. Your mother said he couldn't go down for your father. He was out so long this afternoon. This afternoon."

"We'll have to take a cab."

"But cabs are so dirty, and you never know anything about the horses."

They were still in the telephone closet, and when the telephone rang, Abby answered it.

Donna wanted to take Abby to a lecture on Romanesque architecture at the Museum. "Your tea party this time," she laughed. Her mother and the doctor were going to the concert and Donna could use the electric.

Abby turned from the phone.

"Grandfather, Donna's got their electric. Shall I ask her to take us?"

"An excellent plan. I never like to ride in public cabs. And to such an address. Such an address." Grandfather wiped his round dome.

"I'd love to see the heir of the house of Hahl jerking sodas!" gurgled Donna.

RED DAMASK

The electric brougham stopped with a thud in front of Schneider's drug store. The doctor's chauffeur climbed down from his box and opened the door, overrespectful in his disapproval. He couldn't understand a fine old gentleman like Mr. Hahl bringing two young ladies to such an address, next door to a saloon.

Nor could that fine old gentleman understand it. Abby had been too quick. She had given him no time to think. He blamed Abby when he saw where he had brought them.

Three steps down the store huddled, so narrow and so cramped that the globular bottles in the window, the red, the blue, and the yellow, looked sinister in size. On the yellow one, two skeleton finger marks showed in the dust, where some one had reached past it for useful objects which Twenty-third street druggists kept in mahogany drawers. Pasted on the door was a patent-medicine advertisement that brought a miserable flush to Grandfather's round cheeks. It robbed the store of light from the street lamp, making it dusky compared to the ample brilliance of the adjoining saloon.

"Why didn't Karl get a job at Hudnut's?" Donna murmured.

"Quite right, Donna," moaned Grandfather. "I think you girls had better stay here with Peters. With Peters."

But a man in a red sweater lurched out of the mirrored swinging door of Danny's saloon. He wore a cap over one ear. "Hel-lo, ss-is-ters!" hiccoughed he. A dreadful soprano rang out above a wheezing orchestrated piano:

"There's a light shining bright,
In the window tonight,
For there's somebody waiting for me."

The voice cracked on the low note.

"My God!" Grandfather, very dignified and miserable in his

RED DAMASK

high silk hat and Prince Albert coat, hesitated on the pavement like a fat cockroach between two impending heels. "Come on, girls. You'd better come inside with me," he decided, desperately. "Stand at the door, Peters. At the door," he ordered.

Karl did not welcome them.

He was standing behind the soda fountain, squinting at a mug he had polished. He held it before a pellet of gas, which burned blue on a bracket supporting a dangling sphere of pasteboard that made Grandfather close his eyes again, so baldly did it advertise a well-known product.

As Karl was thin and not tall, his stoop, the drooping lines on his long, horselike face, made him look saturnine. His full mouth resembled Abby's but where hers curved sweetly, his held straightly, ever on the defensive. His fine young forehead furrowed in the scowl his family always saw.

"Well, what do you want?" he said.

Grandfather stared at him, trying not to look at the jagged chocolate stain that showed on Karl's linen coat only because it was newer than the others.

"I want a chocolate-ice-cream soda," said Donna gravely, edging on to a high stool.

Above a walnut cabinet used as a showcase in the rear, a yellow pointed face under a bald pointed dome arose momentarily, as if suspended bodyless, in the dusk. The points converged as the proprietor grinned pleasantly. He stumped toward them.

To Grandfather his wooden leg was another terrible detail in this terrible moment. Grandfather hated the sight or thought of pain or unpleasantness. His grandson's presence in this place combined everything that he hated. His having brought Abby and Donna there didn't bear thinking of.

RED DAMASK

Abby caught hold of Donna's arm. "Donna! Karl, you must not give Donna an ice-cream soda!"

"Mustn't I!" Karl flushed angrily. He pressed the soda tap. Soda spurted into one eye. He wiped it furiously. Donna giggled. Confused, he filled her glass half full of chocolate.

"Young man, this won't do. You must come home with us. What are you thinking of, Karl?" Grandfather turned to the proprietor. "You must not keep this young man here. Young man here." Avoiding the wooden leg, he went close to speak to him.

"Karl, don't you know that Mother is sick in bed? We couldn't even tell her . . ."

Donna took some soda. "I'm afraid it's too sweet, Karl. But it couldn't hurt me as much as three helpings of goose liver. That's what your mother had. The doctor says she'll be perfectly well by morning. Your mother is a remarkable woman," said Donna, gravely.

"I think you're horrid!" said Abby.

"Don't you want your dear mother to be well, Abby? Sweet Heaven! I'm surprised," said Donna.

Grandfather patted her shoulder. "Come, Donna, you've had enough soda. This boy is coming home with us. Mr. Schneider agrees with me that no young man should disobey his father. Mr. Schneider has six sons of his own. Of his own," he added, happily.

For this made his having brought the girls to such an address all right. Mr. Schneider was a family man, and he had become pleasantly susceptible to persuasion after Grandfather bought two large cases of fancy soap. You always could use soap. Grandfather even wondered whether it would be too pointed to present it to Mr. Schneider. The store properly cleaned, the

RED DAMASK

stock properly arranged. . . . Grandfather's old storekeeping instinct was aroused.

"Mr. Schneider," said Karl, sternly, "are you going to . . ."

"Your grandfather is right, my boy. I have sons of my own. . . . Will you take the soap along, sir? My delivery service is rather irregular."

Grandfather decided that presenting the soap might look pointed. "Letting well enough alone" was his favorite motto. But how would the doctor feel about having soap delivered in his electric brougham? What had to be had to be!

"Peters," called Grandfather, heroically, "put this soap in the carriage."

Karl went back to the dispensary and put on his own coat and jammed his hat on his head.

Peters, carrying a soap box with protest in every line of his plum-colored livery, led the way. Grandfather followed springily, wincing at the wheezy notes from that orchestrated piano.

But Karl stopped him on the pavement.

"Now listen, Grandfather. I'm going to get a job in that saloon. By God! I'll make them give me one. And if you follow me in there . . . I'll . . ." Karl couldn't think of anything desperate enough.

"Steal, by God," suggested Donna, helpfully.

"Steal, by God," he said.

Incredulous of what he saw, Grandfather watched him go through the mirrored swinging doors of Danny's saloon.

"Did you ever see 'Ten Nights in a Barroom'?" asked Donna.

There were tears in Grandfather's eyes. "Come, girls. I had better get you home. I don't understand Karl. Karl," he sighed.

None of the family understood Karl.

RED DAMASK

Father, deep in negotiations over the Thirty-sixth street property, furiously took time to march into Danny's saloon and order "that young gentleman" to come home. He would come as a future physician. Father wanted to know what he was building up Philip Hahl & Company for! Karl shrugged his shoulders and served a glass of stout to somebody's English butler.

Father told Mother he was "through with that young gentleman."

Mother ate her usual breakfast: coffee, an orange, oatmeal, griddle cakes and bacon, and a few rolls, with the coddled egg ordered by the doctor, though tears rolled down her cheeks the while—eating to "keep up her strength," because that was her duty.

All the family, supposed to be a comfort when you were in trouble, came to sympathize. In fact, their sympathy emphasized and labeled Mother's hurt, humiliating her more than Karl's defiance.

She went to his room, taking trolley cars because she was ashamed to take Albert, and afraid to take a cab. She found Karl out but a bedbug was in. On a bed without a counterpane it crawled.

She couldn't send Greta, her chambermaid, to clean such a room. How could she let Greta see that Mr. Karl was sleeping there? The servants were told that Mr. Karl was away for a few days.

Dr. Hardenburg was consulted about the bedbug. Instead of a rabbi, Dr. Hardenburg, their health's guardian, was consulted about everything, comfort being paradise and health its golden stairs. He told Karl there was more money in business than in medicine. Karl, whose wants were oversupplied, said he wasn't interested in money.

RED DAMASK

"The son of Philip Hahl & Company doesn't have to be," shrugged the doctor.

But his brother, Karl's uncle, Cyrus Hardenburg, said that if Karl had such a strong wish to be a doctor, he should not be forced into business. Medicine saved human life and was a noble work. Was it right to keep Karl from it?

Then Uncle Elias Wendel, the Judge, used influence, and Karl lost his job at Danny's saloon. He got another with an undertaker, a socialist, who called Father a blood-sucking capitalist when he tried influence.

Donna said she didn't know that Karl had the imagination to choose such a harrowing trade. (It was not imagination; it was geography and chance. The undertaker was a block from Danny's and his errand boy had the mumps.)

"I don't see how you always think everything's funny!" said Abby. "If you could see poor Mother! She's just pitiful. And Father so worried about business, and now Karl. . . . Why, Grandfather said he just didn't feel like hearing Hofmann, and you know how he's been looking forward to that concert. Karl is just selfish. He isn't thinking of anybody but himself! Do you think that's right?"

"Sweet Heaven! How can I tell what's right and wrong for somebody else?" said Donna. "How about your college-entrance exams, Abby? Don't you know you have to decide about them pretty soon?"

"You don't think I'd worry them about myself now, do you?" said Abby, indignantly.

"No, I reckon you wouldn't. You are a little pinhead, but somehow I love you," said Donna.

The sight of Karl among coffins in the daytime and the thought

RED DAMASK

of him among bedbugs at night decided Grandfather and Mother, respectively. They agreed with Uncle Cyrus. Medicine saved human life and was a noble work. It was their duty to give Karl to it.

Father had no time to argue with them. He was too busy with the business he was building up for Karl. (Placid George Hahl, an excellent judge of wines, and his two placid sons were as tacitly ignored in this legend as they were in the store's activity. They merely shared its profits.) For Philip Hahl & Company was signed, sealed, and almost delivered to Thirty-sixth street, and discussions thereunto were strenuous. It was a relief to agree about the nobility of healing and to dismiss "that young gentleman" from his mind.

So Karl was summoned home to victory.

His delighted family found him "changed." His mouth no longer straightened defensively; his fine young forehead no longer furrowed in a scowl. He even obeyed Mother's cuckoo clock. He had his own way.

He was a simple person, with one strong interest strengthened by persistent thwarting and by his isolation with it. Unpopular at Yale, he had dreaded working in another crowd at Philip Hahl & Company. Medicine would mean being alone with drudgeries and ecstasies. He thought that was all he wanted.

He told Abby that if you wanted a thing you had to fight for it.

This new Karl delighted Abby. Forced into constant companionship, they had been as far apart as subway guards on separate trains. Occasionally he growled at her for getting in his way; or she reproached him for neglecting some family duty. They never had talked to each other. But now Abby thought

RED DAMASK

they could. But when she told him she wanted to be an architect he couldn't understand it.

Nobody understood it, except Uncle Stanley Decker and Matthew Heron, Abby's drawing teacher.

Uncle Stanley Decker understood it because he hoped it would upset the family. He had married Father's sister Olive, and lived on her marriage settlement and her ideals, which made a futile *litterateur* out of a fertile advertising man.

He had to sit in his velvet-hung study, sterile, staring at Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister," day after day, week after week, year after year. Translating it would be a ten years' effort, like all great art, according to Aunt Olive, who was devoted to great art.

He couldn't or wouldn't make any effort; which he never knew. Instead, he scribbled advertisements that would have boomed Bauer's corn remedy or David's motor goggles, creations which had to be destroyed. They would have hurt his lofty Olive no less than an infidelity. He loved her. She satisfied him and believed in him. Perversely he blamed the family for enjoying its luxuries without a sacrifice. A martyred sybarite, he had to pay for his stick-pin collection, his pointed patent leather shoes, his canes, and his frock coats.

So he had bought beer from Karl at Danny's because Karl was defying the family. He encouraged Abby's ambition, taking her to art galleries and cathedrals in Europe. When he gave her Cram's *Church Buildings* Erna reiterated: "How fond Stanley is of children! Isn't it a pity he has none of his own! He is so sweet with Abby!" And Olive endured another unsuccessful operation, eager to give him anything he wanted. But it was his need of intrigue that Abby satisfied.

Abby's other source of encouragement could understand any-

RED DAMASK

body's ambition to be an architect. It was harder for Matthew Heron to understand an ambition in which architecture had no place. And Abby compensated slightly for two hours of his precious time and energy spent at the Conrad School each week. He taught drawing there, to supplement his professional salary. His were the struggles between bread and wishes; between commercial and artistic standards; between ambition and physical fatigue. He had a wife and two children, and sixty dollars a week.

At the Conrad School, Abby, alone, took drawing seriously. She, alone, didn't enrage him. He was an irascible young man. And Abby annoyed him with her absorption in detail, though her intuitive recognition of form pleased him. She annoyed him with her high hope to create great buildings. It seemed to him that her gift was suited to little cottages. But any gift should be encouraged.

It was not encouraged by Abby's brother Karl.

"I don't see anything to drawing plans and having workmen carry them out," said he. "There's no problem there. A building is just . . . a building."

"Not to me! And how about the Parthenon? You can't call that just a building, can you?" said Abby.

"But is it usual for girls to be architects?" asked Karl.

"Well, there have been some women architects. Not many. But what difference does that make?"

"It'll make a difference to the parents."

"Well, you got your way. I don't see why I can't have mine. If you want a thing you've got to fight for it!" Abby's eyes darkened, like topaz, with what Donna called her "Search-for-the-Holy-Grail" look. "Didn't you tell me that yesterday?"

"Yes, but medicine is important," said Karl. "And, any-

RED DAMASK

way, I'm a man. That's different. Girls don't have to do anything."

"Is that so!"

Was Abby being ironical to this new Karl? Must wanting your own way make you unpleasant?

Chapter Two

KARL returned to Yale with his next year at Johns Hopkins arranged for. Grandfather endowed a scholarship at the Medical School to confirm the nobility of medicine and his grandson's devotion to it.

And Abby went back to the Conrad School.

When Mrs. Conrad spoke to Mother about Abby's college-entrance examinations, Mother said she wanted Abby to be a fine woman and she didn't believe that college made girls happy. It gave them ideas and they didn't fit into their homes afterward.

"Of course I never think of myself, but I do want the companionship of my daughter, Mrs. Conrad. Karl will be away from home so much now," sighed Mother.

She told Abby that it would break her heart to lose her daughter.

"I have put my foot down," said Father. "My daughter shall not leave my roof until she goes to her husband's. That settles it."

Father judged in well-worn grooves outside of Philip Hahl & Company. At the store he considered expedience and consequences. The store got his share of family fervency.

When Abby said she wanted to be an architect, all thought she was joking, though New Year's Eve and Grandfather's birthday were the regular times for jokes.

None of this moved Abby.

Mother had told Karl her heart would break. It didn't. And Abby's husband's roof was remote. Planning other roofs was imminent, enhanced by the struggle about them.

RED DAMASK

Uncle Stanley asked how she could go to college if her father wouldn't pay the bills.

"I could earn my way through college!" said Abby.

She didn't suspect that he, who had encouraged her, was now discouraging her. Having satisfied one need, she could satisfy another. She had disturbed the family; he could disturb her. Any exercise of power was medicine to his sick sense of futility.

Actually, the family were not disturbed. They didn't take Abby seriously. Karl's rebellion, turned into nobility as it succeeded, was still a disappointment to Father. Mother and Grandfather mourned his prolonged absence from home. And though he might have made himself and them unhappy had he stayed there, staying was a consecration. For Abby, a girl, it was also a duty.

The night before Grandfather's birthday, Mother wailed at having Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Helen for dinner when Tressa had to prepare for the celebration, but she felt that Uncle Cyrus could make Abby realize her willfulness. (Such a nice birthday present for Grandfather.)

Uncle Cyrus had dramatized his righteousness. He had sacrificed a brilliant engineering career to become a consultant to stay in New York with his family. He gave his children every opportunity he thought they should have. He had prospered financially. (All the family made money out of Philip Hahl & Company.) He was a consistent philanthropist. The family prided themselves on "doing a little more than our share," but Uncle Cyrus kept no carriage, that he might do much more.

A big man with black mustachios, he looked like a sheriff in a Western mining town. But his skin was faded salmon pink, the fading of an outdoor man forced indoors. His great frame

RED DAMASK

had gone flabby for want of exercise, but his spirit was inflexible. It blazed out of black eyes that were sometimes bewildered. When he had loved his Helen enough to sacrifice his adored work for her, how could he find her devotion tiresome? Her sweet echo of his every word and thought harassed him. (The harassment of any habit in a person for whom one has sacrificed.) But he fought within himself so vehemently that the family considered him a model of husbandly devotion.

Otherwise he was passionately honest.

He looked at Abby's sketchbook. So did the others. Aunt Helen asked Mother how she liked her new sewing woman. Grandfather asked Father if the new store fixtures had come from Grand Rapids. But Uncle Cyrus examined each sketch. He pulled his mustache and nodded his head, and occasionally raised his eyebrows.

Abby sat tense on the arm of his chair.

"Who told you to do this table leg?" asked Uncle Cyrus.

"Mr. Heron at school. He says that lion's head is a standard form. He says it's hard to say why," chattered Abby, excitedly.

"There is always a good reason for accepted standards." Uncle Cyrus reproved the remark; he could not reprove the drawing. "Abby," he said, solemnly, "some of this is excellent work. That capital there—this foliage from Notre Dame . . . Your European trips have been instructive to you, and you draw pretty well!"

"Why, Cyrus!" said Mother, dismayed. "You will . . . you will make Abby vain."

"Oh, I do want to make you proud of me!" Abby clasped her hands, an eager, taut little figure in rose-colored net. "Oh, I want to build beautiful things, Uncle Cyrus! There is so much that could be done in America!" Tears came into her eyes.

RED DAMASK

"There is much to be done everywhere, Abby," sighed Uncle Cyrus, glancing unconsciously at his wife, a prettier softer Erna.

"There is much to be done everywhere, Abby," she echoed, though she didn't know where he was leading.

"But the right thing must be done first!" Uncle Cyrus looked straight ahead, his black eyes fervent.

All agreed. Mother relaxed in her favorite chair and took up her embroidery.

"But you think I could . . ." Abby leaned over Uncle Cyrus to indicate the sketchbook and bring him (and herself) back to it.

Mother watched her. "Abby, your slippers are rubbing against that good red damask. Get a chair for yourself."

Abby fetched a tiny gilt one.

"My child, you seem to have a little gift," said Uncle Cyrus, conscientiously. "It may be very little. It doesn't mean that you could be a Sir Christopher Wren or even a Richardson. A woman could not be a great architect. Now in general, you know, I believe in higher education and in professions for unmarried women. But their parents must share their views. And Abby dear, no woman could stand that training."

"I never get tired!" said Abby.

"Why, Abby, only yesterday we were going to see Aunt Olive and you wanted to come home, and we had only paid three visits. Aunt Sophie was at a concert with William . . ."

Uncle Cyrus interrupted Mother. "Do you know anything about the training at the Beaux Arts?"

"Mr. Heron went there."

"Hm! Well, Abby, men have told me about their '*Esquisse*' system. The students are locked up for twelve hours to plan a scheme for a complete building. Then they leave a copy of it at the school and take another copy home. The plan must be finished and it must hold to that first scheme in every particu-

RED DAMASK

lar. My child, that is very difficult, even for a man. And how could a woman be locked up with men students for twelve hours?"

Mother blushed.

Grandfather said, "Tcha, tcha!"

Father, bored by this argument, went out to telephone. He saw no reason for talk about a subject he had settled as soon as it was broached.

"Mr. Heron told me about the '*Esquisse*,' and he said they had a woman in his time and they gave her a separate room," said Abby.

"Did he say she was a brilliant student?"

"No, he said she wasn't very . . ."

"There you see, Abby."

"There you see, Abby," echoed Aunt Helen.

"That doesn't prove anything!" flashed Abby.

"Perhaps it doesn't," admitted Uncle Cyrus. "But the thing to consider, Abby, is what you think is right. Do you think it's right to disobey your parents? Do you think it's right to disregard the advice of your elders?"

Grandfather nodded like a mandarin.

Abby walked to the window and fumbled with the curtain cord.

"You are very young, Abby dear," Uncle Cyrus went on. "You must be guided by our experience. But you yourself can't think it's right to do only what you want to do. To think only of yourself. It's not like you to be selfish. I have always thought you a very fine girl. You know that your mother needs you at home. Abby, one can't consider only what one wishes in this world." Again that fervent blaze came into his black eyes. "Our duty to others must come first."

"Abby, you'll ruin that tassel."

Abby dropped it. When she turned and faced them, they

RED DAMASK

saw her eyes wet with tears. Her little fists were clenched to keep them back; the dimple on her upper lip smoothed out, so tightly was it pressed against her teeth. She ran out of the room.

"She'll do the right thing," said Uncle Cyrus.

"She'll do the right thing," said Aunt Helen.

Uncle Cyrus compressed his lips. Habitually he strangled an impulse to snarl at that sweet echo.

He turned to Grandfather and flayed the disregard for human life shown by Japanese generals in the Russian-Japanese War.

"No American general would be responsible for such losses! It's an outrage!"

"But if it's necessary . . . Patriotism must come first. Must come first," said Grandfather, firmly. Patriotism was patriotism.

Father came back and wondered whether Japan would be strong competition for European trade.

The sisters argued happily about the comforts of German and English steamships. Mother felt safer with English sailors. Aunt Helen said the *Lucania* was too narrow. Grandfather joined them and said all the steamers were excellent nowadays.

Upstairs, Abby flung herself down on her rose satin comforter. Her eyes fixed on a strip of embroidered linen, studded with Bat-tenberg lace, which topped and protected it. This was unbuttoned and pressed every evening with the sheets, and changed when they were changed. Dry-eyed, Abby listened to an ache in her chest. It had a dull, tired rhythm. She thought, "What a lot of things Mother has to oversee!" Then she took her shoes off the comforter quickly.

While she undressed she whispered, "If you want a thing you've got to fight for it!" But her conscience answered, in tune to that dull tired rhythm, "What—if—it—isn't right?"

RED DAMASK

She wished Uncle Cyrus hadn't said, "But you yourself can't think it's right to do only what you want to do. To think only of yourself."

Mother came in to kiss her "good night." She reminded Abby that she had been untrustworthy when she went to the matinée alone with Donna. How could she expect them to trust her away at college, aside from other considerations?

Abby said she would be satisfied to go to Barnard in New York and live at home.

Mother said it wasn't the place but the principle and her parents' wishes that counted.

Abby felt unutterably tired, unutterably depressed. Nothing seemed to matter except that after she was in bed, in the dark, she couldn't sleep.

The next day was Grandfather's sixty-fifth birthday.

The Hahls lived in a brownstone house on Forty-ninth street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues, and all the family conveniently lived near by. Before breakfast, Hilda, the waitress, was stationed in the front hall to open the door for them, lest a bell ring and spoil the surprise, repeated for Grandfather every year.

Aunt Sophie and Uncle Elias and their five wonderful children came first. Aunt Sophie tiptoed heavily to the piano. Uncle Elias struck a noble posture in the bay window. It was his place to stand on birthday mornings, and though his legs were a little short, and his stomach a little long, his beard had judicial dignity and his eyes looked mystical, as he thought a religious man's eyes ought to look. He was trying to keep them away from Aunt Olive Decker's perfect figure, and he made up his mind to tell her husband that he should not let her dress so extravagantly. The judge disapproved of extravagance.

The Hardenburgs brought Marina and the two sons down from

RED DAMASK

college because it was a sixty-fifth birthday. But Karl wouldn't come. After her first disappointment, Mother bragged about his devotion to his noble studies.

Uncle Stanley brought his flute, and Victoria Wendel her violin. Though Aunt Sophie had sacrificed her musical future for wifehood and maternity, she couldn't play unless her son William played the drum and beat time for her.

When Hilda signaled that the family had arrived full force, Grandfather started down the stairs and the birthday march pæaned forth, "Vorspiel zu Wagner's Meistersinger," Grandfather's favorite air.

In the parlor all embraced and congratulated one another and Grandfather marched into the dining room on Erna's arm, because she was the wife of the oldest son.

The dining room portrayed its destiny—a chapel dedicated to a sacred rite. Strawberry leaves woven in red damask covered its walls, except where a high ledge held plates on which fish swam or game flew. A cluster of pears was carved on each walnut chair back above red damask upholstery. Through red glass apples outlined in lead, on an inverted bowl, light shone down on red satin under a lace tablecloth and Uncle Elias's beaming listeners.

He told how Grandfather had come to this country; how from the first small store in Harlem, which succeeded his peddling shoes through New York State, he had created Philip Hahl & Company, that great department store which served the community so conscientiously; how Grandfather's success had come from diligence and character; and how he was now retired, devoted to family life and to philanthropy.

"On this your birthday, Father, we think of you with love, gratitude, and admiration, and our prayer is that in good health you may be with your children and grandchildren for many long

RED DAMASK

years to inspire us all. The community needs such as you, and they are rare indeed."

Uncle Elias wiped his eyes with a gesture which showed that he was proud of the sentiment that moistened them. Then he read telegrams from distant relations, and letters from the brothers in Germany, that brought tears to all eyes save Uncle Stanley's.

And then a special birthday breakfast was served and Grandfather, who was plump, ate five German pancakes, which was considered a great joke. There was much laughter.

The New York *Planet* (Uncle Elias had given it the "scoop") telephoned for an interview with Grandfather. Grandfather disapproved of self-advertising. He demurred. Father said it would be good for the store's "founder's birthday linen sale." Grandfather yielded, and ordered twenty-five copies of the paper. In it also was the account of a ward the family was endowing at the Jewish Maternity Hospital, in honor of this birthday.

According to birthday tradition, the morning was dedicated to receiving friends and distant feminine connections; the late afternoon to grandchildren, their special time. The day's climax was the birthday dinner, which a caterer helped to serve, though no florist was called in. For years Abby, who could arrange flowers, had gone into the dining room at half past four on birthdays and worked out an elaborate design in roses and smilax and orchids on Mother's rose-point banquet cloth.

This morning Abby went through the ceremonies mechanically.

She was glad to get to school, away from Mother's mute reproach and the aunt's disapproval.

But at school she found Mrs. Conrad cross and Mr. Heron choleric.

There was a rhythmic, ominous quiet in the air, felt through the screech of trolley cars and the clatter of horses' hoofs; sensed

RED DAMASK

above clanging things and newsboys' melancholy cries. Gusts of hot wind lashed against heated buildings, impotent save for the dust and dirt it sprayed—impotent save that it brought warning of a spring thunderstorm and put uncertain tempers on edge.

After the morning prayer, Mrs. Conrad, as usual, spoke of ideals and Conrad School traditions and doing the right thing. She stabbed at Abby's inner conflict.

Abby was moved.

She swallowed the wrong way and had a fit of coughing. Mrs. Conrad waited for her to stop. She couldn't stop.

"Uk, uh—uk-uh, uhk-khkh," went Abby.

"If you can't control yourself, Abby," said Mrs. Conrad, coldly, "you'd better go out in the hall, where you won't disturb others."

Abby went out and drank some water, and by the time chapel exercises were over her cough was gone.

But she was upset. In drawing class, she couldn't remember how to lay out a drawing, a process as familiar as her family history.

After class, Mr. Heron said, "Abby, this would be a good day for you to sketch the monument of Lysikrates." (He made her do architectural sketching instead of the perfunctory work the others did.) "It's in the Hall of Casts at the Metropolitan, you know. Maybe it will bring you down from the clouds," he added, frowning, as an ambulance shrilled past through a wind now shaking the windows incessantly.

"But I have to get home," protested Abby, dismayed. "It's my grandfather's birthday, and he receives the grandchildren at five o'clock, and then I am to arrange the flowers for the birthday dinner. . . ."

Matthew Heron interrupted her. "I am trying to teach you

RED DAMASK

drawing. That doesn't compel me to listen to the way a group of decadents make a ritual out of aging."

"What do you mean by decadents?" Mr. Heron made Abby forget the respect due her teachers.

"If a pack of adult lions met in the jungle to roar every time one had a birthday wouldn't you question their continued development?"

"What do you want them to do?"

"Bray, Abby, bray."

He closed his desk, wincing as a blast rattled the windows. "I will expect to see that drawing in your sketchbook tomorrow morning," he said.

Abby had been trained to obey her teachers.

Mr. Heron was a teacher, though he didn't talk like one. He tried to be funny and couldn't quite manage it, she decided, vindictively.

And this extra difficulty, his injustice, piled on a day already packed with depression, extended her melancholy until it was not disagreeable. She felt tragic enough to feel almost serene.

To save time she had to take the horse bus to the Museum, though Mother disapproved of public conveyances for unprotected young girls. But it meant nearly an hour's sketching there and getting home in time for the grandchildren's gathering at five, if not in time to change her dress for it. And she was to arrange the floral decorations at four-thirty. It was now three o'clock.

In the Hall of Casts, she had started on the columns of the monument before the storm broke. She didn't hear its breaking.

The building shook. She didn't feel it. No light came through the skylight. The sky had darkened. The lights went on. She didn't see them. Lightning glittered. Thunder crashed. Her

RED DAMASK

body winced. But her eyes and her brain and her emotions held to a pencil that drew lovely lines upon a page.

She knew neither time nor place nor right nor wrong. She saw more lines on blank white paper that had to come true.

A tense little figure in beruffled brown cashmere, she crouched on an octagon bench alone in that great gallery filled with small plaster models in glass cases and large ones on wooden pedestals and details hung on walls: models of architecture so truly and so beautifully ministering to the wants and senses of mankind that they spoke through time.

They sang to Abby. Her ears and cheeks flamed. She chewed her tongue violently. She had decided to attempt a figure on the frieze, though it was beyond her.

She blocked in the body. The legs were wrong. She erased them. She drew them again. The hand didn't grasp that pitcher as it should. She erased it and drew it again. Could she make that thigh line right? There. . . . How hot it was! There . . . No, a little too curved . . . straighten it. . . . She ran to the tiny model of the monument. Yes. Glory be, it was right. Now that suggestion of Dionysus, almost chipped away . . . could she . . . try to do him, too?

It grew later, later still. But all of Abby's tumult and indecision, her conflicts, her worries, and the tensivity of the atmosphere, were flowing into her own tension and out upon white paper.

She had left the world.

The closing bell rang: "Clang-g! Clang-g! Clang-g!"

Five minutes later came the final bell.

Somebody tapped Abby's shoulder. She jumped.

"Beg pardon, miss. We're closing the Museum," said an attendant.

RED DAMASK

She stared at him, dazed for a moment, tingling with a tired ecstasy.

"It's six o'clock," he said.

"Six o'clock! Oh, you can't mean it! You don't mean it!" She begged him not to mean it.

He pulled out his watch.

It was six o'clock.

Frantically she closed her sketchbook. Frantically she dragged on her thin silk coat.

At the entrance she paused, aghast.

The rain fell so thickly that a small rainbow circled around the street light, turned on to meet the early darkness. It reflected on the streaming pavement like a golden sword with a glittering hilt.

There was no bus in sight. A hansom cab trundled toward her. To telephone Mother was useless; she could not send Albert out in such weather. But Abby wasn't allowed to ride in cabs, and hansom cabs were worse. No nice person rode in a hansom cab.

In desperation Abby hailed the hansom.

The horse slid on the wet asphalt. Abby pitied it and lashed herself with thoughts. She had missed the grandchildren's gathering. She had forgotten it, on Grandfather's sixty-fifth birthday! And the flowers for his birthday celebration should have been arranged at four-thirty. She had forgotten them.

She had forgotten everything but herself. That's what fighting for what you want brought you to . . . selfishness. If you want a thing so badly that you neglect your duties for it, you ought to give it up. Sacrifice. And sacrifice was worth while only when you gave up what you wanted. . . . Sacrifice was noble. And it made others happy. How could she have been so selfish? Karl's example. . . . She ought to set him one in-

RED DAMASK

stead of following his! Oh, she had been wrong. Uncle Cyrus said our duties to others must come first.

The air was clear now; the rain smelled sweet. And sweet were those white flowers in that window box she passed. She remembered "the white flower of a blameless life," from Tennyson.

She closed her eyes and it seemed as if her conscience echoed every word; as if it were witness to a vow, King Arthur's vow:

"Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage ground
For pleasure; but through all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life. . . ."

The family were horrified that Abby, after missing the grandchildren's gathering and neglecting the flowers, had come home in a cab, and a hansom cab. No nice person rode in a hansom cab. They couldn't take it all in.

But Abby said she'd be there next year and every year forever. She made them understand that there would be no more argument for college or career. Then all was forgiven.

Grandfather took it as an extra birthday present and was so sweet about her missing the traditional gathering, so sweet about the dreadful way that Hilda had bunched the flowers in a bowl, that Abby almost cried. And she was proud when Uncle Cyrus proposed among the many toasts one to our "Fine little Abby who can be counted on to do the right thing always!"

That night before she went to sleep she looked at the work she had done in the afternoon. It was very rough and much too large. It meant nothing to her. To give it up meant nothing. How could anyone do that sort of thing day after day? She was making no sacrifice! She started to tear the sketches out

RED DAMASK

of her sketchbook. Then she remembered that Mr. Heron would want to see that she had done them.

But she was through with drawing. What was the use of it?

After all, as Grandfather said, Karl's work was different; it saved human life. There were plenty of people to plan buildings. The thought of drawing made her sick.

The next day Mr. Heron kept her after class.

"Well, let's see what you did yesterday," said he.

His desk stood on a small platform. He came down from it and sat in the school seat next hers.

She gave him her sketchbook.

Sparks came to his blue eyes. "Why, Abby! I didn't know you had it in you! That's not bad—not at all bad! It's quite interesting. What got into you?"

Mother didn't believe in praise, and Abby, unused to it, liked it.

"It seems like a perfect mess to me," she confessed. "Drawing anything seems messy, somehow. What's the use?"

"You poor little thing!" he said, very tenderly. He patted her shoulder. (Often his sharp sarcasm had made it wince.)

"Don't you know that's only natural? You're rather intense, you know. And after you've done something good, you often hate it for a while. You're exhausted. Emptied. It's only temporary."

"Oh no! Don't say that!" Her eyes deepened, full of feeling, imploring him not to say it and shake the serenity that came from settled conflicts. "It's all decided now. I'm not going to college. And I'm not going to think of trying to be an architect."

"Why?"

RED DAMASK

"I think my duty is to my parents."

"And theirs to you?" No longer tender, his words came quick, like blows.

"Why, they've done everything for me!"

"Did you ask to be born? What have they done?"

"Everything. . . ."

"Oh, they've clothed you and fed you and then taught you to be grateful to them for the rest of your life for that! What else could they do, having once begotten you? They couldn't have put you out in the streets, could they, without people talking about them?"

"They've taught me . . ." Abby glared at him.

He interrupted. "Respect for your elders," he mimicked. "And for what? What should you respect them for? And duty. And the right thing. How do you know what's right and wrong?"

"I know. My conscience tells me."

"And what is your conscience?" he sneered.

Abby hated him. "You know what it is, when you have one!"

"Thanks for the implication." He walked up and down in front of her. "Listen, Abby. I know your background. The Jews and Puritans are very much alike. My grandfather was a strict Presbyterian, but he never took much stock in the New Testament. He thought it a little soft. It used to make him furious when a town thief went unpunished. He believed in an eye for an eye. I remember at school in Ohio I always got on with the Jew boys. We seemed to understand one another. I think we had a common heritage of struggle and sacrifice and desperately hard work. We had to have patriarchal systems to organize against hunger and cold and hostility, both in Europe and here. Individualism would have meant destruction. And so those who survived were marvelously selected groups who worshiped duty and obedience, possibly because necessities become

RED DAMASK

endurable when you worship them." He stopped for breath and went on: "I don't know whether the primitive man worshiped his appendix or not, but we're told he needed it and that we don't need it. It decays in some people and causes trouble. It raised the devil in me. Others can live with it very comfortably. Abby, you can't live comfortably with your family's ways, the old ways. You're a variant. If you stick, you're done for. Don't I know? I broke away and it was hard, but it would have been harder if I'd stayed."

A fervent look came into Abby's eyes. "It isn't their ways. I want my way to be the right way."

He paused in his stride and shook his finger at her. "How in hell do you know it's the right way?"

They glared at each other.

"You've got to have standards," she said.

"How about a standard of education?"

"I can't go to college if they won't send me." Now that she no longer wanted to go, Abby remembered financial difficulties.

Matthew Heron was used to reckoning with them.

"Now listen." Furiously earnest, he tramped the floor. "I don't know whether you have a gift or not. It's too early to tell. You did good work yesterday. No stroke of genius, mind you. It might have been a fluke. But I'll take a chance on you and I'd like to try out an educational idea. Why, Abby, I entered the Boston Polytechnic when I was sixteen years old, and had to stay there six years because I fell down in mathematics. Six years of wasted youth and energy, doing things I hated. Then a year to get into the Beaux Arts in Paris. By the time I was where I could do things I enjoyed I was almost worn out, and the Beaux Arts people laughed at all that grind. Oh, you grind there! Twenty times harder. But you're damnably interested. I've

RED DAMASK

often thought that if you could let artistically minded youngsters model and paint and draw from the time they're about ten, and not bother them with other studies, they might get somewhere."

"But how about their education?"

"Education?" he mimicked her solemn tone. "Some day I'll tell you. . . . But I'll tell you now that I've never used all that mathematics, and I could have used the time and energy that went into it! Now, Abby, they teach you how to work at the Beaux Arts, and I think I could pass that on to you if you've got the guts to take it. No, guts isn't a pretty word. But they're needed in architecture. It's not a pretty profession. Are you game?" He sighed, because he was tired. Often he was tired.

When he wasn't exploding at his chief about a client who wanted Romanesque doors on a Colonial house he was cursing himself for exploding. It was the client's house, wasn't it? When he wasn't exploding at his wife for trying to dominate his children, he was cursing himself because they tied him to her. In this, their transitional period, when conjugality was shifting to sisterhood, he despised her as much as he could despise a beautiful woman who had shared his harsh struggle; who never irritated him; who appreciated his tart sense of humor.

In this, his period of transition from Puritan to realist, he denied the appeal of Abby's young femininity. He thought her variance in her environment appealed to his rebel spirit. And he whose time was his capital offered to squander some for it.

But Abby shook her head. "What would be the difference between studying at college or with you, as far as the parents are concerned?"

Exasperated, he snapped at her: "They needn't be concerned! We can manage it some way. I'm leaving the school this year. You could come to our flat. Say you're going to visit a friend.

RED DAMASK

Then when we've found out whether you've got enough in you to fight for, when we know how much you can do, then you can strike out for yourself. . . ."

Abby shrank away from him. She looked as if she could scarcely believe what she had heard. "You mean to deceive them? You can't mean to do something behind their backs!"

He stared at her silently—at her pretty fluffy hair tied in a bow at her neck; at her round mustard-colored eyes with their thick short lashes curling back—so wide were they in a real alarm; at her full pink mouth, sweetly curved, now open a little in shocked astonishment. This was neither rebel nor variant.

He wheeled, mounted his platform, opened his desk, took out some books, put them into his shabby portfolio and closed it.

"If you ever get a personality instead of a stone tablet handed down from Sinai inside you, just telephone me, will you? I'm never too busy to hear good news," he said as he went out of the room.

No wonder he was always in a bad humor! No wonder he looked worried and unhappy, always! He had no standards. He had no ideals. How could you expect to be happy without them?

How could he, a teacher, suggest that a girl should deceive her parents!

Oh, she hated him! And she hated his work. She was through with it.

She grabbed her sketchbook and opened the stove door, burning her hand. She thrust the thick book inside and watched it through the tiny isinglass windows. Why wouldn't it burn? It only smoked and scorched. She opened the stove, with a poker this time, and stirred the thick mass of paper.

It burst into flame.

Chapter Three

THE next autumn, after Abby's début in Sherry's red damask ballroom, she went to a luncheon every day, and a tea or a reception. Evenings were filled with dinners or dances or theater parties.

Mother only regretted that times had changed. Large entertainments were held in hotels instead of at the Concorde Club where the small German-Jewish group of Mother's youth had revolved in an orbit of its own, a "one hundred" apart from the Gentile "four hundred"; to them equally exclusive. "The Club was more like one's home," complained Mother. "This way you never know whom your daughter is meeting."

In fact, Abby met none but the offspring of her mother's friends and acquaintances.

Gilbert Ware sent orchids and lilies-of-the-valley for every ball and put his initials thrice on every dance program. His mother had exchanged embroidery patterns with Abby's mother. His father's store had been Philip Hahl & Company's friendly rival. Neighbors at Leitha Beach in the summer, they had played tennis together from childhood, and skated in the Park in winter, on those few occasions when Gilbert was allowed to skate.

For Gilbert had been susceptible to colds and minor children's diseases, a susceptibility his mother increased with hothouse methods and anxious suggestions. Organizing sick rooms gave her something to do. Unconsciously she welcomed and fostered them.

A paragon of domestic virtue, she thought of nothing but

RED DAMASK

home, husband, and children, but she had too many thoughts, too much energy. She trained wonderful servants. Her husband died young. Lewis, her older son, was incurably healthy; he saw little of her, and she put herself on such a pedestal for him that no other woman ever could approach it. Her daughter Regina was incurably healthy also, and Mrs. Ware was jealous of a younger female in a male household. She withheld attention and affection from Regina, and told her how stupid, how awkward she was, and Regina became more stupid, more awkward. She taught Gilbert to put health before happiness, caution before spontaneity, thus increasing his natural diffidence. His energy couldn't combat hers.

He went through Yale with excellent marks and constant reminders from his mother about rubbers and changing underwear and not taking chances. He wasn't allowed to go in a sailboat, nor out for the track team, the track being hard on hearts.

Now, he and his brother Lewis managed "Ware's" store, still on Twenty-third street. Lewis sought his recreation on Broadway with chorus girls and the upper demimonde, which didn't interest Gilbert after a few perfunctory experiences. Nor did social life interest him then, as much as reading romances, seeing them in the theater or enacting them through philanthropy. But he took his social duties seriously, as duties. They were also opportunities to see Abby. His boyish partiality had deepened into a devotion which both took for granted.

Abby realized she mustn't encourage Gilbert. It was wrong to encourage a young man you didn't mean to marry. She didn't want to marry him or anyone she knew. In fact, she didn't want to marry for years. She hadn't time, nowadays, to think about what she wanted. Rarely could she even stay awake to dream about that adorable bungalow where she inspired an ideal

RED DAMASK

knight made of Sir Galahad and Richard Mansfield and Stevenson and Sir Moses Montifiore.

Gilbert begged her not to "overdo the social whirl."

"You should consider your health first, Abby. You're burning the candle at both ends this winter."

"I'd rather burn out than rust out," she snapped at him, and then, sorry when he looked hurt, she confessed that she was tired. "And candles don't rust, anyway, do they?"

Poor Gilbert! He was a fine person, but unexciting.

Nobody she met was exciting; nothing mattered except dashing, on time, from one engagement to another.

In March, Grandfather and Mother and Father and Abby went to Europe.

Grandfather took his cure at Marienbad. And in spite of hotel reservations at Pau, of time-tables carefully marked and addresses given out to the family, Father insisted on going to Monte Carlo because a French manufacturer of coffee percolators lived there.

The buyer of the kitchenware department at Philip Hahl & Company had wired his failure to secure a shipment of percolators destined for a mammoth autumn sale. It was Father's joy (he called it a duty) to wring success from failure.

Of course Mother had to accompany Father, but Monte Carlo was no place for a young girl. Regina Ware was at school in Lausanne. Abby could visit her there.

"Oh, I don't want to!" said Abby.

"It's good for your character to do what you don't want to do," said Mother, automatically. "And such a pleasant trip for Mademoiselle Berilier to take you there. Or you might go to Munich with Aunt Sophie and Uncle Elias for William Wendel's concert."

RED DAMASK

William Wendel, gifted musically, always had collapsed at school recitals. His mother blamed American school audiences. Munich would be different. She was determined that he must be a great musician to fulfil her own ambition, renounced for him and his, according to the family legend. Hahls and Wendels always succeeded. He must.

"I'd love to go to Munich," said Abby. "I can't stand the way Regina Ware treats William, anyway. You know he's been crazy about her for years, and she's always showing off about it. She doesn't care two straws for him."

"Why, Abby! They're only children."

"She does the meanest things to him! One Sunday down at Leitha Beach we were over at Wares' playing tennis, a crowd of us, and she started reading a regular love letter from William out loud. Gilbert grabbed it and tore it up and Regina ran to her mother, but Mrs. Ware said Gilbert was right. Then Regina wouldn't speak to any of us for the rest of the afternoon."

"They're too young for it to be serious. Anyway, William will be giving his concert in Munich. And, Abby, I'm sure Regina wouldn't encourage William if she didn't care for him. You shouldn't criticize her. One must be loyal to childhood playmates. Abby, will you tell our waiter to see that we have some of those croissants for breakfast? He is so attentive. I must say you don't get such service in America. Isn't it a comfort to come to the same place every year where one is known?"

The Elias Wendels, going to Munich from Switzerland, could not be Abby's refuge. The trip to Lausanne was arranged. Mother rejoiced that Mademoiselle Berilier, "an excellent woman," who had taught French to Abby and Karl and their cousins

RED DAMASK

before she returned to Paris to tend her sister's family, would have such a lovely holiday.

But in the hour after Mother's and Father's departure for Monte Carlo, before Abby's train left for Lausanne, Mademoiselle's sister had a heart attack. Mademoiselle was sent for. Abby, deserted in Paris, could only take the train to Lausanne alone.

As the train reached her journey's end, it seemed to enter a realm of nothingness, a bubble filled with silvery vapor. The train's own smoke coiled through it, like a tiny slate-black stream.

On the station platform Abby breathed deeply, marveling at the freshness of a fog that was opaque without feeling damp or depressing. It exhilarated Abby.

She joined the contest for porters.

Many trains were arriving, and Abby noticed a young man's back that looked familiar in the crowd. Its familiarity was puzzling. Abby's brain felt knotted as if it wouldn't and yet must untie! The young man's head turned. Abby saw a wispy, curly brown mustache. It was strange to her. Suddenly its left tip twitched upward, the way William Wendel's lip twitched when he was excited.

Abby ran forward.

"Why, William Wendel!" She caught hold of him. "What are you doing here? Isn't this the day of your concert? Aren't your parents in Munich?"

William faced her. "Oh, Abby!" he said in a relieved tone. "Regina said you'd be here. You can tell me how much to tip the porter. I'm always worried about giving them too much or too little. I carried my handbag, but he took the valise. What do you think, Abby?"

"Give him a franc," said Abby, impatiently. She shook his arm. "William! Tell me what you're doing in Lausanne."

RED DAMASK

They stood aside from the crowd.

William trembled with excitement. "Oh, Abby! You don't know! I'm so happy! Regina said if I'd come here today, we'd get married."

"Married! You're not serious! You're only eighteen! And what did she want you to come today for? Couldn't she wait until after your concert?"

William didn't want to wait until after the concert. But he had suggested such a proof of his devotion without facing the fact that he wanted to miss that concert, feared and dreaded through an overworked year.

"Regina just wants to show her power over you," said Abby indignantly. "Look!"

Regina, jaunty in an Alpine hat with a red feather in it, led several giggling girls upstairs to the station, her light blue eyes glittering with her first triumph since her last prank was discovered. Her pranks inevitably were discovered. She was stupid. But she had to have attention at any cost. Now she hoped to shine by the blaze of William's devotion. No other girl had a suitor who would sacrifice his career for her!

"Abby, you don't think she'll change her mind, do you?" whispered William, anxiously. "She was going to a concert with me alone once, and at the last minute . . ."

"Oh, I don't know what she'll do!" Abby was exasperated. She turned her ear to Regina's kiss.

"Oh, Abby! What a pretty hat! I like you better in narrower brims, though. But I am glad to see you! Mademoiselle could never have brought us to the station if you hadn't been coming, too. It all fitted in beautifully," said Regina, complacently.

The young Mademoiselle was whispering jokes to her young charges.

RED DAMASK

"But, Regina, for Heaven's sake! Are you crazy? Of course you're not going to marry this boy!" said Abby, vigorously.

"Abby, don't . . ." William clutched her sleeve. Through the heavy cravenetted cloth Abby could feel his fingers tremble.

"Waltz me around again, Willie," hummed Regina, airily. One light blue eye winked at Abby. She shook her head significantly, a childish imp, pathetic and blundering, ruthless and unsatisfied. "Come on. We have to get back to school. We'll get Made-moiselle to bring us to your hotel after luncheon, William. Abby, isn't William's peekaboo mustache killing? What's the matter with him?" Her gay voice shrilled to alarm.

William had turned ashen gray. His clutch on Abby's arm shook it with his trembling. He sank down on a bench and fainted.

A crowd gathered, a useless babble of many tongues. Made-moiselle cried, "*Donnez-moi du sal volatile. Vite. Mais vite!*"

Abby kept her head.

Regina turned and pushed through people to get away. Abby grabbed her and shook her. "You go for a doctor! Quick! Do you hear?"

In five minutes the doctor arrived. William stirred. The school bus took them to his hotel, Abby tacitly in charge. The doctor barked questions in French at her while William was still in a daze. Had the boy been under a strain? He had. Were there earlier symptoms of mental disturbance? No. William always had been nervous, though. He was very talented. The doctor laughed shortly. Had the boy a tic? Abby didn't know what a tic was. The doctor explained impatiently that it was a twitch of a facial muscle, a symptom of nervous strain.

"Why, yes," said Abby. "Whenever he gets excited. Otherwise he has wonderful self-control."

RED DAMASK

The doctor nodded. Where were the boy's parents?

"They're in Munich. But I don't know their address. William would know it. William!"

But they had come to the hotel. The doctor motioned Abby to wait.

William, relaxed in an immense bed in an immense room, suddenly rubbed his eyes, opened them, and murmured: "I fainted, didn't I? What a silly thing to do!"

Abby breathed a long sigh of relief. "You weren't well, William dear. But you're all right now. We want to let your parents know. You would like your mother here, wouldn't you?" She patted his hand.

William drew it away and sat up in bed. "Oh, don't send for her, Abby! Let me have a chance to think for myself."

Abby looked at the doctor significantly, sure that William must be delirious, but the doctor shook his head.

"Don't you see, Abby? She'll make me go back and try it again. I can't. I tell you I can't. Something snaps when I see all those faces. When I think of seeing them." He covered his eyes with his hands. "I've begged her to let me teach music, and she says it would break her heart for me to disappoint her. I don't want to disappoint her," he wailed. "And now . . . I'm not enough of a man for Regina. . . ." He began to cry.

He sank back on his pillows.

Abby took the doctor aside. "But I must send for his parents. They don't know where he is. He was supposed to play in a concert and he came here. . . . Of course I can find them through Cook's," said Abby.

"It is difficult for me to advise you, mademoiselle. In such a case the mother might be the worse medicine. She is very dominant? Yes? The boy has been a puppet? Yes? He is

RED DAMASK

intelligent. He knows that. He fears again his mother's control? No? This I must tell you, the boy is on the verge of a serious nervous collapse."

"But his parents should be here."

The doctor shrugged. "Perhaps."

"How could I take such a responsibility?" Abby was thinking aloud.

"Mother," mumbled William.

"Of course he wants his mother!" said Abby.

She sent a wire to Cook's.

The great south window opened out on nothingness; the glass looked frosted. Beyond it, the fog, a mass of silver whiteness, like a dry still sea, seemed to shroud the world, drowning time and place.

A stout Swiss sister moved about her duties quietly, apart and impersonal. The distant twang of tramways and some pealing church bells swung into an echoing rhythm, like the far-off rustling of monstrous wings. It seemed to beat a sort of time for the boyish voice that came continuously from the dark high bed.

William had lapsed into semi-delirium. The doctor said this was to be expected and suggested Abby's removal to an adjoining room, but Abby couldn't leave William with a strange nurse.

She had kept her head when William fainted. She had arranged everything with the doctor, assuring him somewhat contemptuously that his fee would be paid and that William's parents could afford the best care. Now there was nothing but to wait for Aunt Sophie and Uncle Elias. Her intense activity, coupled with a not disagreeable sense of being equal to an emergency, was gone. Fatigue and anxiety remained, and finally, horror.

For Abby was horrified by William's clear sentences, discon-

RED DAMASK

nected one from the other, and yet as in a kaleidoscope loose pieces of colored glass fall into a pattern, so did they tell William's story, complete and dreadfully symmetrical.

They rambled from then to now. Each sentence covered an epoch disassociated from the next.

"Do you think Regina will do it? . . . Mother, don't make me wear that Windsor tie. . . . How the sun burns my arms! . . . If I tell you I'll practice, I will, please believe me, mother. . . . I can't help seeing the black dog. . . . They all stare at you from the front, and then something snaps in my head. . . . I must stand on that other doormat. . . . Ugh! what a draught blowing! . . . I don't want to disappoint you, mother. . . . A mustache makes a man look older. . . . Tennis makes me so tired—must I play? . . . It's suffocating in here. . . . How can a little boy who is afraid of dogs protect his mother from one?"

A scene flashed before Abby: Aunt Sophie, big and solid, cowering from a small puppy on the board walk at Leitha Beach; William, a trembling boy of ten, taking her arm, trying to be brave, and then Aunt Sophie saying, "How can a little boy who is afraid of dogs protect his mother from one?"

And Abby began to see how Aunt Sophie, William's own mother, had clouded every dawn of his self-confidence. And dim dawns they must have been, needing kindly lights.

A tiny white cuckoo came out of its wooden chalet on the wall. "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Three o'clock. It was like Mother's cuckoo clock, only larger. "Parents always know what is best for their children." How often Mother said that!

William went on.

"Don't laugh at me, Regina. . . . There's another doormat by the window that I didn't see. . . . I'm so afraid. . . . Father doesn't care anything about us except to take us to temple Sat-

RED DAMASK

urday mornings. . . . How about the Concerto in F? . . . Mother will say I'm spoiled if I tell her I'm tired. . . . Will vaseline make a mustache grow? . . . Where did that tennis ball go? . . . Oh, I can hear it bark, I tell you! . . . How nice it would be to teach music in a quiet study of your own. . . . Don't play that harmonica, Julia! . . . Isn't the humidity awful?"

Abby fingered the antimacassar covering the stool on which she sat. She took out the pins that fastened it, tiny steel hammers with sharp points, and put them back again. She put her hands over her ears for a moment. She saw William's pale lips moving. She saw the nurse write something on a chart, neat black writing crawling on white paper like a quiet spider weaving a web.

"That rustle when you come out on the platform. . . . Henry, where did you hide my music roll? . . . Mother, I don't want to break your heart. . . . I can't eat oatmeal; it sticks in my throat. . . . All right, I'll go to the dance. . . . But I went to see Aunt Olive last Sunday. . . . I'm afraid I'm going to be sick. . . . Regina, your eyes are like aquamarine with the sun shining on it. . . . Mother, don't make me play Saturday. . . . Ugh! that draught crawls down my back! . . . Why don't they stop teasing me? . . . I can't stand that wind."

Abby looked at the nurse. Sad, faded eyes smiled back at her.

Suddenly Abby remembered a chloroform dream. She had happened to have a throat operation shortly after a visit to an observatory. Again she felt alone, helpless, and frightened, on some dead planet. That strange fog seemed as empty and was as full as space. And the room was peopled with phantoms and one pale light, as in her dream. But these phantoms were all the same person. A shrinking baby, forced to eat oatmeal when

RED DAMASK

it choked him; a trembling little boy being called a coward when he was trying to be brave; a bigger boy teased by brothers and sisters, domineered by his mother, forgotten by his father, exploited by his sweetheart; a gifted youth, born with extra feelings, oversensitized.

"Must I do that Latin tonight? . . . Henry, I'll give you my cake if you'll go away. . . . Will it disgrace them if I run away from Munich? . . . What is that in the corner? . . . That piece is too hard for me, Mother. . . . How I hate all that white snow! . . . Would you kiss me, just once, Regina?"

Abby wished she could cry. It wouldn't matter. The nurse sat apart by that pale light and read a shabby Bible.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Five o'clock. Abby was thankful for that cuckoo clock, a link with reality, a link with home.

Time passed.

The south window was turning gray. Night came. At midnight Aunt Sophie and Uncle Elias would be there.

William dropped into a doze.

Abby, too tired to sleep, too tense to find a comfortable chair, sat and waited, trying not to feel any more. She thought that Aunt Sophie must let William teach music, though she had always scoffed at such an idea when Dr. Hardenburg suggested it. This Swiss doctor said it was William's only hope. William could not stand strains.

But Aunt Sophie's first words to William were: "William, you have disgraced us all! But I talked to your director. I persuaded him to let you have one more chance. You must go back and show that you have character!"

William had awakened, conscious.

He gazed at his mother's bulk of black silk mantle trimmed

RED DAMASK

with glittering jet, leaning over him. He nodded quietly. His mouth twitched.

Abby sobbed.

"Why, Abby, if you can't control yourself, you mustn't stay here. Exciting William! This Doctor Mirot tells me you have been very helpful," Aunt Sophie added, conscientiously. "I don't think so much of him, though. He's more of an alarmist than Doctor Hardenburg. I don't think William looks so bad. He seems perfectly all right to me. Elias!" She called her husband from the next room. "We'll take him to our old Doctor Bloch in Berlin. He's always said William would outgrow his nervousness."

"Doctor Bloch is very prominent in the Zionist movement. He's related to the Kenheims, you know, Abby. A very fine man, though his wife wears rather extreme clothes. He shouldn't allow it. I don't like this Swiss doctor, either. How did you happen to call him in, Abby?" asked Uncle Elias.

But Abby ran out of the room.

The last thing she heard was the cuckoo clock, her link with home. Was it the only link? If Aunt Sophie and Uncle Elias could be so wrong about William, why should her parents always be right?

She closed the door and flung herself on her bed.

How tired her eyes were! How hot the lids! She closed them, feeling them burn. And she saw a horrid image—a herd of animals, large, slow-moving animals, that sucked instead of suckling their young. . . . Big round placid eyes, eager old mouths, and the young wilting. . . . Like a lost calf she had seen wandering on the Jersey meadows as the train went through . . . the same panic was in William's brown eyes. . . .

Her head ached. . . . Why, her family thought of nothing but their children! Aunt Sophie saying, "Cyrus always calls

RED DAMASK

me the Spartan mother," waggling her head, pleased. And William had to be sacrificed to that pleasure! . . . Really, her family thought they were gods, trying to create children in their own images. Father and Karl. . . . But Karl escaped. . . . Uncle Cyrus sending Marina to college, when she didn't want to go; and Abby wanting to go and not being sent! . . . It was almost funny.

Wasn't it wrong to think such thoughts about one's family? Aunt Sophie's other children were happy. . . . "My wonderful children."

Abby yawned. What conclusion could you draw? You had to draw a conclusion. . . . Standards . . . conclusion . . . confusion. . . .

Abby went to sleep.

Back in New York that fall, Abby thought she'd learn etching. But Mother wouldn't let her go to the teacher without a chaperon, and he wouldn't have her with one.

William's disaster had opened her eyes to blind parental discipline, and she submitted only because after a year's inactivity her hand fumbled, its old certainty gone. Besides Rembrandt and Dürer, her high standards, such sprawling lines on smudged paper seemed futile.

Her social rounds seemed even more futile. Mixing moods with morals, she decided it was wrong to do nothing but enjoy yourself, instead of realizing that talk about the dance floor and music and plays had grown stale; that fresher débutantes were in greater demand.

She was elected treasurer of Houston House, a settlement Mrs. Conrad organized when she had to sell the Conrad School to pay the debts of her profligate son.

Soon the family avoided Abby.

RED DAMASK

When she said, "I'd like to have a little talk with you after dinner," they would murmur, "So many demands on one nowadays," or, "You know the asylum is building a new wing and we directors have to dig into our own pockets."

Abby hated asking for money.

She hated the aimlessness of her life. She wouldn't let herself hate its routine: calls to congratulate the family on birthdays and anniversaries; to "see" them on other days. Sunday evening the family dined with Mother; Tuesdays they went to Aunt Helen's; to Aunt Olive's on Thursdays; other evenings Abby spent with them unless there was a dinner or a dance or a theater party. Then Mother asked, "What time is your dinner?" and there were endless arrangements about Hilda the maid's taking her, and about using Albert, who was now the chauffeur; and Mother asked: "What play are you going to see? Where is it playing?" Then at breakfast: "Was it nice? Did they have a caterer serve? Who sat next to you? What did they say?" And every morning Mother said, "What are you going to do today?" Abby went shopping and walking, to art exhibitions and concerts with Mother; or she had luncheon engagements and tea engagements with Rose Hahl Kenheim and Marian Kenheim or the Wendel girls or Elinor Riemann, and was questioned about them afterward. Abby wouldn't let herself hate Mother's questions.

She hated her luxuries when she saw the slums. Her fur stole would buy shoes for fifty children whose red toes crept through tattered leather. But her parents had given it to her; she had to wear it.

She gave money from her dress allowance to housing movements and anti-tuberculosis funds and the Settlement. She had none left for a fall suit.

"How can you be so extravagant?" said Mother.

RED DAMASK

Abby had to explain.

Then Mother said, "Abby, your grandfather has just endowed another bed at the hospital in memory of Grandmother, and Father never refuses anything worth while. We always do more than our share. Your allowance is given you to dress on, and if you wore last year's suit people would say Father was stinting us. The daughter of Philip Hahl Junior has to be properly dressed!"

Abby realized that she had nothing of her own to give, except herself. She decided to be a resident worker at Houston House.

Albert always took Abby in the automobile to the Settlement for her boys' club, the Swastikas, which met on Wednesdays.

The Swastikas met riotously, for Abby, not naturally domineering, couldn't chasten youngsters so obviously chastened by poverty. When she tried district visiting she wept over the poor families instead of taking case histories. When the Swastikas locked her in a coat closet, she couldn't punish Solly Moskovits, their leader, because his trousers had a pitiful calico patch in the seat. When Abby said they couldn't watch a passing parade until they had finished with some fine Michelangelo prints she had brought from Italy for their History of Art lessons, Solly tore up the prints. Abby's sad "How could you?" made no impression on Solly, but Solly's using a blue rag for a handkerchief made a deep impression on Abby. She bought handkerchiefs for him. All the boys used blue rags ostentatiously, and Abby endowed the Swastikas with handkerchiefs. She never knew that they sold them.

But Elinor Riemann's Girls' Club next door complained to Mrs. Conrad about the Swastikas' noise.

"Boys will be boys," Abby defended them loyally.

"You're supposed to teach them to be gentlemen," said Mrs.

RED DAMASK

Conrad, who kept the teacher attitude toward the old Conrad School girls.

One Wednesday Mother needed the automobile to go to Aunt Sophie's. Abby insisted on taking the trolley, and Mother gave her hurried, dubious consent.

It was noontime in November. A chill wind shredded the lemon-colored sunlight as Abby got on to the Broadway car. She tightened her mink stole around her neck and snuggled her hands in her muff, wishing she had worn her fur coat instead of the short-jacketed brown broadcloth, bought with the check Grandfather put on her breakfast plate when he heard about her finances. He said he was proud of his generous little Abby.

Abby transferred to a cross-town trolley and with each eastward block she felt a new stab of sadness, a new stab of guilt. She was glad she hadn't worn her fur coat. She was ashamed of having one. She was glad she felt chilly. What right had she to be comfortable when the old woman next to her on the carpeted seat had roughened reddened hands with blue finger tips?

They passed children sitting along the gutters, two of them fighting over some orange peel snatched out of a garbage can. Thin women big with child haggled with pushcart venders over wilted vegetables and grayish black stockings. On that tenement window was pasted a triangle of dirty wrapping paper where the glass was broken; another, dusky with grime, showed a dim old face pressed against it, wrapped in a ragged shawl. What right had she, Abby Hahl, to live in satin damask?

By the time she reached Houston House her fierce pity had hardened into determination. And Houston House was like a strain of music in a brawl. For Abby it sounded the note of service and sympathy, of "something to be done about it." And it was so clean.

RED DAMASK

Its windows shone behind flower boxes, now filled with neatly clipped evergreens. Its brass door knobs and bell pull were as bright as Mother's.

But at luncheon the two secretaries who were working there for half their usual salaries fought playfully with two resident workers over sitting next to Mrs. Conrad. Their adoration disgusted Abby, who never had had a "crush" on Mrs. Conrad. She and Donna and Mrs. Conrad's beloved son alone were untouched by that strong personality, deaf to a voice which throbbed like the bass notes of a violin; which won interest for the settlement far outside the German-Jewish group.

Behind shining glasses Mrs. Conrad's clever gray eyes moistened now with fatuous emotion. "I'll let them fight it out." She stood waiting, a graceful, distinguished figure in her black skirt and prettily embroidered white shirtwaist.

Abby went to the other end of the long table.

A visiting Englishman, a Russian with a shrug, a downy-faced youth and two reverential girls newly graduated from Krell College, a tight-lipped New England spinster, and a robust Pennsylvanian were residents.

Mrs. Conrad admirably served the community with her vocational night schools. But she wanted to dominate everybody. (She couldn't even influence her son.) And she wanted to make ambitious social contacts. (Her son so often had humiliated her.)

"I notice you've got Peter O'Dooley for the Sunday night forum," said the robust Pennsylvanian.

"Yes. I had an amusing session with him. He is delighted. And he may be useful to the Settlement. It would be splendid to have the public school buildings opened in the evenings. And Mr. O'Dooley has influence with the Board of Education," said Mrs. Conrad.

RED DAMASK

"Not Peter O'Dooley, the Tammany politician!" said Abby.

"The same, Abby, my gurrol," Mrs. Conrad's lovely voice played into an Irish brogue.

The residents paid tribute to it.

"But, Mrs. Conrad, how can you stand for the things Peter O'Dooley stands for? You can't know what he is. Grandfather came in contact with him through the hospital and he's just in for graft and nothing else!" insisted Abby.

"Tammany robs the rich, the other party the poor. The rich can afford to be robbed," shrugged the Russian.

"Abby, I think that Mr. O'Dooley may be useful to the Settlement. Houston House comes first. We need his coöperation. There is nothing else to be considered."

"But, Mrs. Conrad, if he speaks here, it looks as if you were in sympathy with him," Abby went on, stubbornly.

The Pennsylvanian put on her glasses. They fell off and dangled on a black cord. She felt for them and pressed them on to stare at Abby. "Miss Hahl, you must realize the importance to the Settlement of having the district coöperation. Mr. O'Dooley runs this district politically."

"But he runs it dishonestly! I don't understand, Mrs. Conrad, how you can . . ."

"I have explained the situation. It is too clear for further argument, Abby," said Mrs. Conrad in her Conrad School tone. "Has anyone read the last child labor report?" she asked.

Abby subsided. The two secretaries glared at her.

After luncheon Abby went into Mrs. Conrad's inner office.

Mrs. Conrad was signing letters. "Well, Abby?" Her clever gray eyes looked up, impatiently.

That look stirred bristles in Abby. She felt antagonistic, though she wanted to be in sympathy with her future comman-

RED DAMASK

dant. But she couldn't excuse Mrs. Conrad's vanity, nor approve her support of Peter O'Dooley, and to base an unfortunate dislike on disapproval was comforting.

Then Mrs. Conrad rang for a secretary. "Just a moment, Abby. Henrietta, this sentence has to be corrected. Make it, 'This boy shows an interest in ceramics.' Not 'has an interest.' It isn't necessary to rewrite the letter. Well, if you want to. . . . I'll wait here to sign it. Henrietta is so conscientious," sighed Mrs. Conrad, comfortably, and to Abby, "That letter is about a boy we are placing in Mr. Riemann's china factory. He couldn't pass at school, but we think we can make a useful citizen out of him through his specialized bent. It is a wonderful work, Abby."

"I think so, too, Mrs. Conrad," said Abby, fervently. What did her personal dislike of Mrs. Conrad matter when through her she could give herself to such service? "I want to come down here as a resident worker," she said.

Mrs. Conrad raised her eyebrows. "Have you discussed this with your parents?"

"No. I thought I would talk it over with you first. And if I feel that it is my duty to come, I don't see how they could . . ."

"I cannot discuss it until I talk with your parents, Abby. And I must tell you that I have grave doubts as to your fitness for the work. Our resident workers make sociological surveys of the neighborhood. You are too emotional to do that. You have no control over your boys' club. And what is far more serious, Abby . . . I do not feel that you have the proper confidence in my judgment."

"Oh, if you're thinking about Peter O'Dooley! I only thought you didn't know what kind of a man he was, and Grandfather's experience with him at the hospital . . ."

"When the end is for the good of Houston House, it justifies

RED DAMASK

any means. And Mr. O'Dooley is not going to recommend graft at the Forum. In fact, I imagine that he will make a most sanctimonious speech," smiled Mrs. Conrad, grimly. . . . "Ah, Henrietta, did you correct it?"

Mrs. Conrad took the letter to sign, and Abby knew she was dismissed.

She knew also that she would never be a resident worker at Houston House, because Mrs. Conrad didn't want her there. Abby was willing to waive their disagreement (though not to deny it). Mrs. Conrad was unwilling to waive it.

Mrs. Conrad called on Mother two days later and left with a substantial check for Houston House, awkwardly presented but gratefully received. Mother appreciated Mrs. Conrad's assurance that she would not encourage Abby to oppose her parents' wishes. Emphatically they did not want her to live on the lower East Side. And Mother appreciated Mrs. Conrad's further assurance that Abby wasn't fitted for the work, an assurance which Mrs. Conrad repeated to the Grand Street Settlement when they called up for Abby's record.

The family opposition (when Abby felt like opposing them), Mrs. Conrad's opposition (her personal opposition), stimulated Abby to apply at Grand Street, though she realized her unfitness for the work. Her intelligence told her that pity was not enough. It told her that if she had flattered Mrs. Conrad it might have been linked to Mrs. Conrad's fitness.

But how could she flatter Mrs. Conrad and keep her self-respect? Her self-respect was part of her character, the most important part of herself.

How many selves were there, she wondered, and, half asleep, half awake, one night she had a phantasy, half dream.

She saw a carnival float drawn by a great white horse with a flowing tail and a plume on its head, driven by a giant Abby.

RED DAMASK

The float was filled with little Abbys: the family's Abby, kneeling, pressed down by an invisible weight; her head was taut, defiant, and she murmured, "Poor William! Poor William!" and then, turning her head, she murmured, "Poor Abby! Poor Abby!" for she saw another Abby, leaning over a drawing board, crying at wobbling lines on a smudgy penciled tower. A captive Abby, chained, in a gleaming rosy robe, waited with hands outstretched for a perfect knight who was coming down from the clouds. An Abby sat at a pretty Empire desk, writing, "Dear Donna, I love you, but I wish you'd be good." A society Abby in a satin evening dress with a train bowed: "How do you do? How are you? How do you do? How are you?" And the loveliest Abby, wrapped in white, scattered gold pieces along the way. A weeping Abby bandaged a cut on a little ragged sobbing child.

Oh, Abby, giant Abby, hold your banner high! Drive straight. Hands firm on those reins. Quiet the horse. Giant Abby. The Abby, do not swerve. One false turn and what a tumble! How the little Abbys would scatter in the mud. Oh, what panic! Oh, what terror! Abby, The Abby, drive with care. For you are Character. And you must guide them all!

Chapter Four

WHEN Karl wrote that he was bringing a friend from Johns Hopkins home for Christmas, Mother was delighted. Bringing friends to the home was a Hahl and Wendel tradition, combining safety with sentiment. No harm could come under parents' watching eyes and guiding voices; nothing could be sweeter than a happy family circle enlarged by the friends of its young.

"What's his friend's name?" asked Grandfather.

"Jacob Bernstein," read Mother.

"Bernstein? I don't know any Bernsteins in Baltimore. Now the Goodmans of Baltimore are a fine family. Banking business. They came over in 'forty-eight, from Hamburg. But I never heard of any Bernsteins. Does Karl say . . ."

"Father, you know the children must feel that their friends are welcome in their home," chanted Erna.

"We must be careful now, Erna. Abby is growing up. We ought not to have any young man in the house that we would not want her to marry. Her to marry," said Grandfather.

"We can trust our Abby, Father! And I think having young people in the house will be good for her. She has been a little quiet lately."

But as soon as Grandfather saw Jacob Bernstein, he said, "What did Karl want to pick up that Polack for? Polack for?"

And Father said, "I never could stand Polacks or Kikes. You can't trust 'em."

German Jews avoided Polish and Russian Jews, whose struggle

RED DAMASK

for mere existence in persecutory countries had forced them to develop shrewdness without ethics. They were unfair competition for the ethical Germans who always obeyed the letter and often the spirit of the law. So the Germans detested their tireless craftiness, which had no restraints, and called them Polacks and Kikes and excluded them from the charity boards, the social and financial indexes of New York Jewry. In the past, the more leisurely, cultured Portuguese had tried to exclude the German Jews, whose dogged industry had menaced and reduced their power. The Portuguese Jews, absorbed into Gentile groups or dead, had vanished as a force in the community. They had feared the Germans. The Germans now feared the Russians and the Poles, though they didn't call it fear.

And to Grandfather and Father, any Polack was a Polack, the one to be judged with the whole. If many Polacks seemed unreliable, all were. Grandfather took no account for individual differences in anything. He judged according to definite associations which had formed definite patterns in his orderly life. These patterns served him. Therefore, judging the whole with the one, he thought they should serve everybody. And Father agreed with him, except in Thirty-sixth Street. The buyer for the ready-to-wear department, (Philip Hahl & Company's most important department) was a brilliant Russian Jew. Father trusted him implicitly. He shared Father's devotion to the store as an institution, Father's contagious, hypnotic enthusiasm. He was a Kike, but he was different, for Father—in Thirty-sixth Street. And Father didn't mention his origin to Grandfather.

But Jacob Bernstein appealed to Abby's sense of romance, and Abby, disappointed in herself, was ripe for that appeal.

He had fine dark eyes, like sounding boards echoing the sufferings of his people in Poland. Very tall and very thin and very dark, he was the Semitic type emphasized and romanticized until

RED DAMASK

it suggested Southern cavalier stock, except that all the lines in his face curved downward. It was a face made for sorrow and emotion and defense.

His father was an obscure tailor who worked in an obscure shop in Baltimore. Karl said that Jack was a genius.

Their friendship was founded on a common aim and complementary personalities. Neither wanted to practise medicine. Neither liked to humor patients with talk when the patient had interesting physical signs of fascinating and unfathomable diseases. But the patient would recover, or die, or leave the hospital before they could begin to investigate those diseases. Both resented this continuous blockade. But biological research in 1907 was chiefly occupied with microscopic examination of cellular tissue. Both found that inadequate and unsatisfactory. Both were eager to go further in a labyrinth which was then in darkness. There was nobody to tell them what to do or how to do it. They had to attend clinics and patients, but they had sympathetic instructors and a laboratory to work in.

Jack worked in flashes. Interested in analyzing blood in various diseases according to new methods just being introduced by Folin, he had devised a way for determining blood sugar which his instructors thought would be useful in the study and treatment of diabetes. But when he wasn't getting flashes, he pottered.

Karl, at twenty-one, had selected his permanent problem, "the Theobald Smith" phenomenon, observed while standardizing diphtheritic toxin in guinea pigs. It was noted that those guinea pigs used for this purpose that survived had acquired a great susceptibility to subsequent injections of normal horse serum made several days or weeks later. And a number of investigators took up the problem. Karl injected guinea pigs with normal blood serum or milk, and injected it again fourteen days later,

RED DAMASK

and saw the guinea pigs die with spectacular symptoms. Many had made the same experiment and had marveled as Karl marveled at the phenomenon of death produced by substances ordinarily harmless.

Karl's intellectual curiosity absorbed him. He had no other interests. When Jack talked socialism or Zionism, Karl withdrew into his thoughts.

But Abby listened and learned that she belonged to a superior race persecuted for centuries by inferior people. She forgot that her rabbinical and professional forbears, highly respected in South Germany, had rarely been persecuted. And Jack's vivid story of his father's escape from a pogrom in Warsaw covered him with glamour. It covered details that offended Grandfather.

Grandfather was offended by Jack's tan shoes; by his improperly gartered socks; by his soft shirts and his queer tan suit; by his unacquaintance with the Goodmans, that fine old banking family of Baltimore; and by his opinions. Grandfather couldn't imagine a socialist in the Hahl home, a socialist being Karl's friend, but he almost suspected Jack of it.

A socialist when he wasn't a would-be capitalist, in either rôle Jack was sincere. He hated money when he wasn't wanting it. Crammed with chaos and contradictions, he could be heroic and sacrificial one moment, base and greedy the next. Tenderness piled on cruelty. He was an idealist when he wasn't a cynic.

One evening before dinner he went into Abby's sitting room.

"My radiator won't turn on," he lied. "Can I warm myself by yours?"

When he shivered in his poor thin suit, something tapped on Abby's heart, shaking it, moving it.

She did not ring for John, the useful man, to repair Jack's radiator. Instead, she knelt to reach the knob on hers, cunningly concealed behind a tan painted grille in the window seat.

RED DAMASK

Jack put his hands in his pockets and looked around the room. He had never seen such luxury.

The walls were tan damask, the ceiling white with gold scroll-work, and from it hung a chandelier like a tiny glass fountain, its prisms tinkling and shimmering with every step on the soft Oriental rug. Tan velvet draperies festooned the windows, over taffeta curtains that changed from fawn color to rose or emerald green in shadow. Knights bowed to gracious ladies on tapestry covered chairs; the sofa was high-backed, like a small rosewood throne.

Dressed for dinner in soft velvet, mustard-colored to match her eyes, Abby seemed a slim princess in a fairy tale. Smooth brown braids, coronet-fashion, crowned her fluffy pompadour. Her pearl necklace played rainbow with the twilight where her heart-shaped bodice ended in chiffon ruching at the neck. But she knelt now, her velvet train clasped about her young body, velvet folds purpled in the dusk.

Jacob Bernstein came toward her. Abby looked up at him, her eyes dark with compassion.

His eyes, too, had darkened, but not with compassion. There was defiance and pain in them. They defied the softness and the beauty and the luxury of Abby and her room. And yet he had decided to marry her for them before he ever saw her. Their tans and rose jarred on him because they soothed him so. Abby and her room were filled with magic, filled with Abby's sweetness, tense with it.

He tried to turn away from her.

"Those pearls of yours would feed a thousand children," he said, harshly, because he didn't want to say it.

"I know it, but Grandfather gave them to me on my eighteenth birthday. He'd be so hurt if I didn't wear them. Oh, don't you think I feel guilty . . . to have all this? . . . I'd give it away

RED DAMASK

tomorrow if it were mine to give. . . . I . . .” Tears came into Abby’s eyes.

They shattered Jacob Bernstein.

“Oh, don’t cry, darling, darling, darling, darling.” He moaned “darling” as if he couldn’t stop saying it. He caught her hands and kissed them. He kissed the soft pink palms and the tips of each finger and the wrists; hard, fast kisses, kisses that couldn’t stop, kisses that grew by what they fed on.

His lips, crushing, warm and soft and hard against her hands, tingled her nerves, a tingle that echoed like bells ringing through her veins. And echoing, died in eager languor as he drew away.

There were footsteps in the hall, and then a knock on the door.

“Dinner is served,” said Hilda.

“Wait,” he whispered. “Don’t go downstairs with your eyes like that. They’ll know.”

Abby blinked her eyes. She wondered what he meant. She had a faint wish that he hadn’t spoken of her eyes, but it vanished when he helped her to her feet. For all this time, eons and eons of time, she had been kneeling by the radiator. When he touched her, bells tingled, muffling every thought.

In the parlor, Mother tragically awaited her dinner guests. Tressa, the cook, flustered by a rebellious kitchenmaid, had actually ordered Hilda to announce dinner while the Kenheims, the Elias Wendels, and Donna Pirez were still removing their wraps in the hall. Tears of distress came to Mother’s eyes, but she controlled them bravely.

Karl turned the pages of a scientific journal, wondering whether Donna Pirez had changed. Could she make him, a junior, a future scientist, feel dumb and profane? He wished Abby wouldn’t spoil his vacations by having her around the house!

RED DAMASK

Grandfather winced when he saw Jacob Bernstein and wished that he could present him with a dress suit. Direct contact with poverty disturbed him.

Father fidgeted, uncomfortable in his high stiff collar, tired from the daily struggle to bring Philip Hahl & Company through a financial panic.

"Labor isn't willing to bear its share of the hard times," he complained to Grandfather.

"Why should it?" said Jacob Bernstein, cockily. "Why should the working people lower their standards of living? Why should they be the chief sufferers when the panic was caused by the blunders of financiers?"

"Young man, you are talking like Mr. Gompers. Mr. Gompers," said Grandfather.

"Mr. Gompers will have to decide whether it's more important to keep his wage scale up and throw men out of work, or whether he'll lower wages and make work possible for everybody. You can't get away from the law of supply and demand. That settles it." Father's arm thrust forward like a javelin, driving home his point.

"The law of supply and demand. Supply and demand," echoed Grandfather.

"When labor is at a premium, it dictates. Now employers can dictate," said Father.

"Quite right," agreed Elias Wendel, coming into the room. "The unemployment will bring about a wage reduction. Hunger is the great logician."

"Then if Congress were any use, it would provide government work for the unemployed. It isn't fair for them to . . ." Jacob Bernstein's voice died away. The Kenheims were greeting and being greeted.

RED DAMASK

Mr. Kenheim's rotundity made Grandfather seem gaunt, but his military bearing and his fierce mustache belied it. He had been a drummer boy in the Civil War. Then came a hard struggle, through which he romanticized the war. And when success came, he identified himself with Napoleon. He stood always with a thumb under his coat lapel. He brushed one lock of hair across his forehead, until he lost it, and then he wore a toupee. His office was decorated like Napoleon's throne room, and from a royal chair on a raised dais he controlled America's sugar industry with his head, its Jewry with his heart. He kept them separate. He could crush a small sugar refinery without mercy or regret, and then give more than his profit to an orphanage. Sugar was his empire, philanthropy his justification.

His wife went in for dignity, good works, and obstetrics. She could scarcely wait to ask Mother for "news" about Rose Hahl Kenheim, married just two months.

At dinner Mr. Kenheim attacked the Republican administration. It had attacked the trusts.

Now Elias Wendel admired Mr. Kenheim, but he adored the Republican party; it had elected him. He disapproved of Donna's black satin dress, a very innocuous dress, but his wife never looked like that. Why should other women? The Judge was such a moral man. And instinctively he disliked Jacob Bernstein because he was Polish. But he was supposed to like all Jews, to feel that mystic bond he talked about at political meetings on the East Side. Altogether the Judge was having an agitated meal.

"Why should Mr. Roosevelt hit industrial centralization with one big stick, and enforce governmental centralization with another!" said Mr. Kenheim, thumb under coat lapel.

"Don't you believe the government should take action to force

RED DAMASK

labor to accept a lower wage scale in this present crisis?" asked Father.

"That is a different story. That is centralization with a purpose. I have written to Mr. Roosevelt, offering my coöperation in any scheme of that sort. Labor must bear its share of the hard times," said Mr. Kenheim, smiling at Mother's pleasure when he took a second helping of lobster *à la* Newburg.

"Do you hear that, young man?" Grandfather sang out at Jacob Bernstein.

"Yes, sir," said Jacob Bernstein, gloomily, his first words since Mr. Kenheim's arrival.

Mr. Kenheim liked young men. "Are you interested in the labor question?" he asked, kindly.

"I . . . well . . . I think maybe Congress ought to provide work for the unemployed."

"But, my dear young man, if the wage scale is lowered, there will be no unemployed," said Mr. Kenheim indulgently.

"Mr. Bernstein doesn't think it should be lowered. Lowered," said Grandfather.

Mr. Kenheim gave Jack a cold stare.

Jack squirmed. "It doesn't seem quite fair . . . but I don't know . . ." he said, lamely, flushing, his eyes moist with sudden tears.

Abby saw them. They drowned her shock at his apostasy. To Hahls and Wendels opinions were only less sacred than traditions.

The others looked puzzled.

Abby broke the silence.

"Mr. Kenheim, I want to have a talk with you after dinner," she said,—her formula, as treasurer of the Houston House Auxiliary.

"I can guess what that means," said Mr. Kenheim, playfully.

RED DAMASK

"And I am always grateful for the opportunity to give to a good cause."

Mr. Kenheim's income averaged over a million dollars a year.

"How funny for him to weaken his stand! Jack was talking like a walking delegate before Mr. Kenheim came," murmured Karl to Donna Pirez, his dinner partner.

This was his first remark. From soup to salad he had been consciously silent, inexplicably depressed, while Donna, trying to meet his mood, worked to interest him. She wasn't pretty. She had the courage of her vitality and a natural gift for experimental psychology. She knew she had to work to interest men. And she could try to meet their moods because she did not need constantly to assert her own personality. It was rooted in an ancestry and planted in a place, which kept her from the usual Jewish sense of social inferiority and homelessness. Her family, settled in Tennessee six generations past, had declined in power, but it had grown tendrils in the State.

Fixed socially as a "nice girl," not "fast," Donna had no opportunity for being unconventional. However, the chase satisfied her at present. A man thrilled her until she caught him. Then she tired. But not catching him hurt her vanity, a sensitive spot. She never hurt anyone. When she tired, deliberately, she made the man get tired. It was all a game, not to be taken seriously.

Now, Karl's intelligence as well as his indifference fascinated her.

"Was Mr. Bernstein really talking like a walking delegate?" she asked him, as if it were vital to her and his saying it were brilliant. "The Bernsteins probably worship Mr. Kenheim, the gr-great Jewish philanthropist, and he's probably heard about him all his life. Disagreeing with him would be like slapping

RED DAMASK

Santa Claus. Even if you knew he was a myth, you couldn't do it. You're right."

Karl wondered what he was right about, but the inference was pleasant. He began to feel less depressed.

Then Donna said, "It must be wonderful to be a doctor and make people well. Why, nothing's worth while unless you feel well! I'll bet there's more healing for the soul in medicine than there is in metaphysics!"

"If we knew anything about medicine. I haven't learned much, except how little anybody knows. It's too uncertain. Practice wouldn't really interest me. Jack and I are going into pure science."

"How does the family feel about that?" said Donna, quickly, and then wished she hadn't said it. There was no sense in bringing unpleasant possibilities into pleasant conversations. But family rows were not unpleasant possibilities to Karl when he could gain by them. He could ignore them, then.

"Oh, I haven't told them yet. The subject hasn't come up. They always get used to things," he said, carelessly.

"Karl, I think you are a wonder! I love the way you see what you want, clearly, and make up your mind to get it!"

She smiled into his eyes, and suddenly his own eyes seemed to get caught in hers. They were deep and black and intensely, horribly disturbing. He was aware of her black satin dress clinging to her tiny form. He was aware of the diamond-shaped fraternity pin over her heart, and of another, shield-shaped, by its side, and unaware of their double significance. He was aware of a warm odor of violets and of an effort to look away from her. He couldn't. And he was suddenly, awfully, tensely unhappy. His throat felt dry and he felt hopeless, for no particular reason.

RED DAMASK

Hilda passed the ice cream, molded marvelously in the shape of a turkey. He turned to it.

He lapsed into silence, from which he did not, would not emerge.

And Donna thought she had lost.

Grandfather worried about Abby's interest in Jacob Bernstein and nobody would worry with him. Father was absorbed by Philip Hahl & Company's new bargain basement, and Mother by Tressa's fights with kitchenmaids. "This is the fifth in a month," moaned Mother, "but one doesn't discharge a wonderful cook one has had for fifteen years on account of kitchenmaids."

Grandfather gave a theater party that Abby might contrast Jacob with Gilbert Ware and Dudley Kenheim. They contrasted painfully in his mind; he thought they must contrast in Abby's. He stopped worrying.

He didn't know Abby's mind. It noted that Gilbert had neither fervors nor surprises. Jack had both. Gilbert always said and did the right thing, but you knew he would. Dudley was brilliant, but he was flippant. Jack had a high purpose. And Abby resented their ease and opportunities when Jack had to struggle.

Abby's mind was swimming in the flood of her emotions.

On her way home from Rose Hahl Kenheim's first reception, she met Jack at the corner of Forty-ninth Street. She forgot that Mother would be waiting for an account of Rose's dress, the decorations, and the refreshments. She remembered that this was Jack's last evening in New York.

She turned, and they walked up to Fifty-ninth Street and eastward, Abby unconsciously bent on escape from friends and acquaintances.

RED DAMASK

In the January twilight street lights were like orange balloons floating in a light blue sea. Carbon lamps on automobiles glimmered wanly, scarcely brighter than gilt letters on red signs that curved over corner saloons, or the tin pail in which a child carried beer. A woman walked with a rakish red plume on a tattered tulle hat, her powder and paint looking green and purple in that queer light. A pretty girl with a white feather boa and violets on her coat hung on the arm of a young man who was biting his cigar, his derby on one side. At Madison Avenue the cross-town car passed, with a screech like waves breaking on sharp rocks. An old man driving a runabout held his girl's hand while he waited. A white hearse rolled by, followed by cabs with drawn blinds. Newsboys shrilled about murders and suicides and discovered loves in a wild monotone that rang above the long-drawn whistles of traffic policemen, and beat like a chorus above the rushing roar of the city.

"Sometimes I love New York," said Abby, happily. "It's so alive. It isn't beautiful like European cities, but it's so exciting."

Jack guessed that the city was not the cause of her excitement.

At Second Avenue they met a street carrousel, a round kiosk, glittering with brass railings and brass rods and gay saddles and bridles on gayer hobbyhorses. Its scarlet awnings shook to the tune a man in a tam ground out.

"Give my regards to Broadway,
Remember me to Herald Square . . ."

Children danced around it, girls' pigtails swinging merrily, boys flinging caps in the air. Old ladies in shabby shawls tapped ancient shoes, keeping time.

Now, Abby didn't notice that the shawls were shabby nor that

RED DAMASK

the children were meagerly clothed. She felt their joy and gayety, because she felt gay. She skipped along, humming,

"Give my regards to Broadway,
Remember me to Herald Square. . . ."

Oh, she was happy! She loved that rollicking tune. She lifted her face to feel the blue twilight blow against it, soft aërial down with a salty tang, for they were near the East River. And Jack had to take her arm as they walked across rough cobblestones. She loved them, too, and the swearing teamsters and their straining big-necked horses, and the rumbling wagons, and the great pile of steel and masonry that would be Queensboro Bridge.

Jack led her up the stone incline to the beginning of the bridge's footway, far above the muffled "Glnk . . . brunk . . . blrnk-glink" of tugs and barges in the river below, above and alone on the gallery, swung in its steel tracery into space.

They talked about Jack's hopes and dreams.

He told her about his notebook, filled with things he wanted to find out. He wanted to find the cause of hiccoughs and the cure for aneurism and deforming types of rheumatism.

Jack was her ideal knight come true, toiling through science "to redress human wrong," to cure the ills of the world. He had renounced material success, "not making his high place the lawless perch of wing'd ambitions." He fitted into her Tennyson, drowning her old dream compound of perfection. Waked to reality, Abby's emotions had the indorsement of her soul.

Where the bridge ended, they turned to look back on New York.

Lights like silver spangles pricked turrets and minarets and spires out of the deepening sky. As if it had been enchanted out of the whirling depths of blue, the city shone in a mist, like

RED DAMASK

silver dust. It soared and tapered and surged, glistening, serrated against moving starless darkness.

"Look—" Abby's voice failed. She had no words for it; her throat swelled with ecstasy.

The wind sang through steel lace.

They stood and faced each other, queerly deliberate for a moment, both almost crying, a little frightened in their innocence and youth. And then they sought each other. He put his arms around her, holding her close, trembling. Lips pressed on lips, exquisitely eager—tender, exquisitely languorous.

They drew apart, shaken, bewildered, and then they kissed again.

A ferry whistle startled them. They laughed a little.

Again they saw the city, green and rose in its silvery vividness, colored through the excited tingling of their young delight.

"Isn't it a beautiful, beautiful city!" chanted Abby.

"Yes, it's beautiful from here." He was jealous of the city.

"But there are bread lines in the Bowery."

He broke its spell.

"Jack, what have we done! Isn't it wrong?"

"Wrong? To kiss each other when we love . . ." But to speak of kisses was to want another.

"We mustn't," said Abby.

But they did.

"It's my last night, precious."

"Oh, Jack, it must be terribly late!"

She broke away and started quickly toward home.

"We'll be late for dinner and I don't know what Mother . . . she'll be so upset."

He caught up with her.

"Some day"—he took her arm—"we'll be together, always, won't we?"

RED DAMASK

"Always," she promised, shyly, solemnly, fervently.

Jack Bernstein had planned this before he saw Abby. A poor scientist needed a rich wife. Now he resented Abby's wealth and feared its obstacles. Out of his chaos came a contradiction. He forgot his plans and sincerely wished that Abby had come from the crowded mean streets they were hurrying through.

Abby reached down in her fur collar and drew out the tiny gray enameled watch she wore around her neck, a dainty diamond-studded hexagon, on a gray enameled chain.

"It's after seven!" she cried, dismayed.

They were not late for dinner.

For the first time in twenty years, as Mother tearfully reiterated, dinner was late. Tressa's sixth kitchenmaid had blacked Tressa's left eye. "To think of such a thing happening at Mrs. Philip Hahl's," wailed Mother. And then Tressa summarily departed for parts unknown.

"With my having done everything for Tressa. Hilda and Anna are trying to make some dinner. Oh, you remember how we sent money to Tressa's family in Vienna when they had the measles? And she's been with me for fifteen years! I don't know what the world's coming to!"

Amidst such a crisis nobody noticed that Abby and Jack were late, nor that their eyes were like topaz and black diamonds, lit by an inner flame.

But two days later Abby came home from a tea to find Mother in her sitting room, reading Jack's first letter. (Such a wonderful letter!)

"You have no right to open my mail!" blazed Abby.

"Why should you want to receive letters you wouldn't want your mother to read?"

"Oh!" said Abby, inadequately.

RED DAMASK

"Abby . . . this . . . this Jacob Bernstein . . . such presumption!" Mother was angry at his presumption.

"Presumption!" Abby took up the word. "He's a genius. I think it's wonderful that he looks at me! I'm in love with him and I'm going to marry him!"

Mother stayed calm. "You aren't old enough to judge. But I thought we had given you such high standards . . ."

"Just because he's poor. I don't care. I'm not afraid of being poor!"

"You know that isn't the reason." Mother's voice was sad. "You have such different traditions, Abby. Imagine his family. . . . His mother probably wears a shidel and they don't eat ham. You'd be miserable. And, anyway, you wouldn't go against your parents' wishes."

"I love him."

"No, Abby, this is just an infatuation."

"It isn't. And you have no right to open my mail."

"For you to say such things to your mother! It shows that man's influence. A mother has a right to do anything to protect her child. Oh, we shouldn't have had him here, but I wanted Karl to feel that he could bring his friends to his home. And now with me having such a hard time. I haven't found a cook yet." Tears came to Mother's eyes. She sank down on Abby's rosewood sofa.

Abby stood very erect, a dainty mutineer, in a wine-colored broadcloth suit and a white lace waist; wine-colored plumes bobbed on the large hat which topped her pompadour. Her pink mouth was set and she clasped her hands tightly inside the pretty muff which had Jack's farewell violets pinned on it.

So Father found his womenfolk.

"What's the matter?" he said, testily. The furniture buyer at

RED DAMASK

Philip Hahl & Company, though a husband and father, had eloped that day with a lady in the lingerie. Father, who prided himself on his judgment of men, was disappointed. He was horrified when he found the furniture department left understocked in sectional bookcases. Surely a man ought to be able to find peace in his own home!

Mother looked up at him tragically. "It's Abby. We shouldn't have had that Jacob Bernstein in the house."

"What? What's that you say?" Father had quick perception. "That Polack!" he thundered. "I won't allow such a thing! What is it?"

"It's just that I love him and I'm going to marry him." Quieted now, Abby took the hatpins out of her plumed hat and put it on the gold lace hatstand in her bedroom.

Father followed her to the door.

"You'll do no such thing! That loafer! I forbid you to think of him again. Do you hear?"

Nobody heard Grandfather's springy step on the stair landing, though Abby's door was ajar.

He came in, smiling. "The Charities Alliance has voted a building fund for the Jewish Maternity Hospital." This was his pet charity. "I looked for you all over the house, Philip. We had a fine meeting. A fine meeting."

There was no response.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Abby thrust her fingers through her hair to fluff her pompadour, flattened by the plumed hat. "I'm in love with Jack Bernstein and I'm going to marry him," she said.

Grandfather suddenly sat on the sofa beside Mother. "But, Abby . . . you saw him with Gilbert Ware and Dudley Kenheim. He isn't a gentleman! Erna, didn't I tell you that you

RED DAMASK

shouldn't have that young man in this house?" Grandfather shook his head with gloomy satisfaction at his foresight.

Mother huddled against a satin cushion and began to cry.

"Now are you satisfied?" Father shook his finger at Abby. "You've made your mother cry. I forbid you to think of that fellow again. Finished!"

Father drove his arm forward like a javelin and left the room, his usual method of settling things at home. He never acknowledged its futility. At the store, where he hired and fired, this method might succeed. There he was too good an executive to try it. At home, he tried violence because his helplessness, also unacknowledged, bewildered him.

"Abby, you couldn't really love a man . . . your parents disapprove of," sobbed Mother. "This is just an unfortunate infatuation." Jack's letter dropped from her trembling fingers.

Abby picked it up and held it tenderly.

"Just an infatuation," agreed Grandfather, somewhat cheered by any diagnosis.

Separately, the family spoke to Abby about her "unfortunate infatuation for that Jacob Bernstein." Aunt Aurelia, whose daughter had married a Kenheim, said she would be throwing herself away.

Honest Uncle Cyrus had to admit the boy's worth and intelligence, but he told Abby to respect her parents' judgment, whether he agreed with it or not. His children had to respect his judgment. Having sacrificed his career for the family ideal, he had to uphold it.

Aunt Sophie's wonderful Victoria was engaged to a wonderful young mathematics instructor in an Indiana college. "You should contrast John Dodd with your Jacob Bernstein," said

RED DAMASK

Aunt Sophie, wagging a proud head. He wasn't wealthy, either, but it was something to have such fine old Puritan stock in the family!

"Abby should see how unhappy she's making her mother," said all.

Mother's healthy pallor had turned greenish; her blue eyes were grayed from weeping. But Abby was her secondary worry. She didn't believe that Abby would marry Jacob. It was unthinkable. But the disorganization in her household was a fact. Tressa's troubles with kitchenmaids had given it a bad reputation at the employment agency. First-class servants shied away from it. She couldn't find "the right person." And Karl refused to go to Europe with the family that summer. He had decided to work in the laboratory and he wouldn't change his mind though she wrote him all her troubles.

Nor would Abby change her heart.

Every time they "spoke to her," it felt bruised and violated, but each word strengthened its conviction. Emotion had lashed Abby's brain to the knowledge that she was right and they were wrong, according to every canon of her romantic idealism except her devotion to parental authority, and that should yield to love. In fact Abby had learned gradually to doubt the absoluteness of that authority. Since that dreadful night of revelation with William at Lausanne, Abby's mind admitted the fallibility of parents.

And she wouldn't consider Jack's poverty, or his Polishness. She saw his father in a scholarly patriarch painted by Israels, hanging in Mother's parlor. She imagined his mother's spirituality, "a handmaid of the Lord."

She bought an Old Testament. (Mother considered it too sensual.) She read the book of Ruth and memorized:

RED DAMASK

Intreat me not to leave thee,
Or to return from following after thee:
For whither thou goest I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge;
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God, my God;
Where thou diest, will I die,
And there will I be buried:
The Lord do so to me,
And more also,
If aught but death part thee and me.

Always susceptible to beauty, moved by its rhythmic appeal, Abby wondered if this were the tug of a racial return, and slipped into the synagogue one Saturday morning.

But Mr. David Brockfield in a frock coat with a gardenia in his buttonhole ushered her ceremoniously into Uncle Elias Wendel's pew.

"Ah, Abby, I am glad that you have come to the Lord for guidance," Uncle Elias whispered pompously and a little triumphantly, as if the Lord were another of his celebrated intimates, unknown to the rest of the family.

Aunt Sophie tacitly claimed the synagogue. She showed Abby how to follow the service, and explained the religious symbols. She pointed out the choir's excellent soprano, and regretted its tenor.

And Abby knew that at Aunt Aurelia's birthday dinner that night, Aunt Sophie would say, "Well, Abby, how did you enjoy the service this morning?"

And Mother would say, "Why, Abby, did you go to temple?"

And Aunt Aurelia would say, "Howso did you go to temple, Abby?"

RED DAMASK

But now Aunt Sophie was whispering, "That's Doctor Leopold. A wonderful man, Abby."

Harassed by the anticipation of that future inquiry, Abby missed the spiritual exaltation she had hoped for.

"Holy shall ye be, for I, the Lord your God, am Holy," said Doctor Leopold, sonorously, through his nose.

Abby remembered that Grandfather said he was insincere, and Father told how he had worried the Brockfields about his investments during the panic. He had tired greenish eyes, and he always closed them at his periods.

"So is the Jew, chosen of the Lord, sanctified in Holiness. His life is in the path of the highest and best. He has ever trusted in God, and has kept to the glory of noble ambitions, of godly aims, of spotless chastity." The green eyes closed.

Abby felt uncomfortable, stirred on the surface by his rhythm, irritated by Aunt Sophie's proprietary nods and nudges.

Her mind wandered to Jack, to Elinor Riemann's new hat in the next pew, to the fact that she was hungry, to an appreciation of the heavy architectural symmetry of the temple.

". . . devoted to the sanctity of the home, the authority of the state, the godliness of mankind," the sonorous voice went on, extolling Jews through its nose.

It was curious that when Jack said things like that she believed them, and when Doctor Leopold said them she didn't.

Mr. David Brockfield was sleeping, not too quietly. Uncle Elias was listening to all the virtues he shared.

And then came the prayers for the dead, majestic, moving, though Abby couldn't understand the Hebrew. Black-draped, grief-ravaged faces, stony faces, stood while it was said.

Oh, suppose something were to happen to Jack! Sudden illness . . . accidents . . . runaway horses . . . an infection in the laboratory. . . . Oh, how did people stand losing loved ones!

RED DAMASK

Not fervent enough to light new fires, Doctor Leopold's abstract holiness left Abby cold. She had no habitual religious responses, smoldering from childhood, ready to flame from any spark. But death was different. It might happen to her or hers

Chapter Five

FATHER had forbidden her writing to Jack, and Abby couldn't disobey, concretely.

"Do you need an extra postman in this house?" Uncle Stanley asked her, one evening in her sitting room. He had wanted to see a new Dürer print that Grandfather had given her. Grandfather planned to inspire renunciation through gratitude, and when he had a plan he stopped worrying, which was a relief to the old gentleman.

Alone with Abby, Uncle Stanley didn't look at the Dürer print.

"What do you mean by an extra postman?" Abby was puzzled.

"Don't I look like Cupid's messenger? All the world loves a lover, Abby. I like to speed on love's young dream!"

Abby had discovered an ally in Uncle Stanley.

At dinner he had said, "All of us needn't make worldly marriages," when Rose Hahl Kenheim's new home was described. Smiling at Abby, he missed Father's scowl. Nor did he feel the general irritation when he told Grandfather that those who thought it patriotic to believe in a democracy often found it Quixotic to practise it. Instead, he enjoyed his own phrase.

Long years of security had made Uncle Stanley's innuendoes less subtle. And the family understood more than he thought they did. But long years of sterility made him ache to see them squirm. "Wilhelm Meister" still stood on his satinwood reading stand. And securely locked in a chased silver box (polished by Aunt Olive herself; opened by none save him) was a notebook,

RED DAMASK

entitled, "Wilhelm Meister, translated by Stanley S. Decker," filled with advertising layouts for floorwax, hygienic underwear, fountain pens and tooth powder; filled with reflections on current politics, new thought, hypnotism, the degeneracy of Russian literature, and his agreement with Mr. Henry James's distaste for the American business man.

"My dear Abby," he said, patiently, "I mean if you want any letters mailed to your Jacob Bernstein, I'll mail them for you."

"You mean, on the sly!" flashed Abby. "I could mail them myself if I wanted to be a sneak."

Uncle Stanley shrugged. "Oh, so we have a Quixote in the family, after all. You'd better be sure your young man is another. Love has to have something to feed on, you know. It's not self-sustaining."

"Our kind is!" said Abby, proudly.

"Wait and see." Uncle Stanley put on his glasses to look at the Dürer. "Very nice. When you're Mrs. Jacob Bernstein you'll have to see your pictures in the museums, if you have time to go to them. But I believe the baking-powder companies are putting little pictures in every can. You can look at them, eh, Abby?" He pinched her cheek.

Abby tried not to shrink from him, his guile a small cloud on her dark horizon. It had darkened as day after day went by with no word from Jack. She hadn't heard from him for two weeks.

And suddenly, stimulated as always by anger, Abby began to think. If she missed Jack's letters, wasn't he missing hers? What was the use of obeying Father about not writing to him when she was determined not to give him up? One's duty to love was stronger than one's duty to parents.

But she would not deceive Father.

Downstairs she told him she wanted to speak to him in her sitting room.

RED DAMASK

There she stood in front of him rigidly.

"Father, I just want to tell you that I am going to write to Jacob Bernstein."

Father looked bored. Why didn't the women settle these things among themselves? "Abby, I have forbidden you to write to that Polack. I put my foot down. That settles it." He started out of the room.

She took hold of his sleeve. Mustard-colored eyes set in square flat features above a flowing mustache met mustard-colored eyes set in pointed features, set wide apart, lighting a heart-shaped face. Irrationally Father noticed for the first time that Abby was pretty. Irrationally he felt a sort of pride in her prettiness. But a girl shouldn't stand up to him like this!

"Would you disobey me?"

"If I must," she said.

They stared at each other with a queer new liking, recognizing a common strength, a strength that irritated Father in Karl because it defeated his son's succession in his business. But this strength of Abby's (clad in her prettiness) he was proud of. It was a part of the will that had created a great department store out of a smallish shop. She got it from him and he was proud of it.

But will against will, it was deadlock. It might have stayed deadlock except that Abby's desire to write to Jack was stronger than his opposition to it.

"Abby, what do you see in that fellow?" asked Father.

"He . . . he . . . Oh, he's so fine. He has such high ideals."

Father grunted. "Well, I haven't said you could write to him!"

"Well, I say that I am going to write to him," flashed Abby.

"I wash my hands of the matter," said Father.

And after he left, Abby, tingling, sat down to write to Jack.

RED DAMASK

She told him how much she loved him and how much she missed him and about Doctor Leopold's unspirituality, and then she had nothing more to say. Shouldn't you have everything to say to the man you loved? But they had no common memories and few common interests. She could applaud his work when he told her about it, but it was too technical for her to discuss.

She sat at her little Empire desk, chewing her penholder. She remembered how Jack had weakened his stand on the labor question with Mr. Kenheim. Father wouldn't have done that!

And yet to a certain extent she had won out with Father. He must have recognized that love had its rights. Father never would have given in otherwise (and he didn't give in, exactly). Where did she stand? Was she disobeying or wasn't she? Abby liked things definite; seldom she found them so.

Love had its rights. Ah, she saw Jack's face, his great beautiful eyes; she felt his lips on hers. Oh, she wanted him, wanted him, wanted him!

"Your own Abby," she wrote, and sealed the letter, marched downstairs and through the hall.

"Where are you going, Abby?" called Mother.

"Just to the post box at the corner to mail a letter to Jack Bernstein," she said, coolly.

The next morning as Abby came downstairs for breakfast she saw Hilda sorting the letters on the hatstand. There were four small piles. There was something for her.

She thought: "I won't hope it's from Jack and be disappointed again. It's probably a letter from Gilbert Ware; he's in Paris now. And Donna owes me a letter. And it might be a bill, though it isn't the first of the month. Anyway, I won't hurry. I'll just take my time. . . ."

But from the last stair landing she saw a thick envelope,

RED DAMASK

heavily inked. She ran down the stairs and grabbed it out of Hilda's outraged hands and rushed up to her own quarters with it.

She slammed the door. "Oh!" She kissed the envelope. Warmth rushed to her face. How silly she was! She laughed a little. Then she had a sillier notion. Wouldn't it be fun to lock it, unread, in her glove box, and go down to breakfast, knowing that she had an untasted treasure? "Saving the best for the last." No, she wouldn't do that. She remembered playing with Regina Ware and Mother's coming to the nursery with a sliver of chocolate for each of them. Abby liked to eat hers slowly, "saving the best for the last," but Regina would gobble, gobble, and then cry for half of Abby's, and Abby had to give it up because Fräulein said, "Abby, you can't be selfish when Regina is your guest. . . ."

Ah, but Jack's letter was hers, and she would gobble, gobble, gobble it! She adored the way he dotted his i's as if he were crossing t's. She adored the way he began it.

Darling, darling, darling [she read]. I like to write that, though you don't deserve it.

Abby sat down on her sofa, leaned against a pillow, sighed ecstatically, and read on, though it was hard reading, so hurriedly, so emotionally was it written, as if the pen had been jerked, sputtering, across the page.

How could you stop writing to me! Suppose your father did tell you not to! Do you have to obey him? Are you a child? Or couldn't you post a letter at the corner without reading the address to the family? Do they have to know everything you do? I was terribly worried about you, and finally I had to ask Karl if you were sick. You can always get the truth out of Karl. So your parents don't like the idea of a poor scientist for a son-in-law. I didn't think they would. But why should

RED DAMASK

you care what they like? You're different. If you haven't outgrown them you're not the wonderful girl I think you are.

Do you think I care what my parents want? They wouldn't be so crazy about an atheist, either. But you don't think I keep Kosher with them, do you? You ought to see my father (not that you ever will; I wouldn't let them bother you, darling), a bum East Pratt Street tailor, whining because a better man across the street gets all the business. And my mother whining because Mrs. Finkleburg gets a new silk dress; or crying because Mrs. Kelman has fresh chickens twice a week. Complaining because my sister goes to business school instead of staying home. That's what I get at home. Or Father nagging. I should set up a doctor's sign. "Dr. Klein makes such good money by all the teeth he pulls." Should I obey them?

Oh, Abby darling, we're young. We matter. They're old and they've lived their lives. We can't be dragged down to them. We've got to step over them and go on. What if they are hurt? Somebody's got to be hurt. If it isn't them, it'll be you.

You needn't worry. I don't believe your fat bourgeois bunch would know how to suffer. Darling, you don't belong to all that pompous materialism. Don't let them smother your soul with roast duck and red damask. But they couldn't.

Darling. Darling. Darling. I love you. I shall expect a letter from you by Saturday. I have figured out the trains. Your own,

JACK.

Abby finished it.

She got up from the sofa and stood by the window, one hand on her hip. "Well, what do you think of that?" she said, aloud, as if she were some one else. She read the letter again, word by word, slowly. It got no kisses this time.

"Or couldn't you post a letter at the corner without reading the address to the family?"

She had despised Uncle Stanley for such a suggestion. Oh, why didn't Jack think of her way, the honest way? Facing them.

Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequences.

RED DAMASK

So had it proved for her with Father. (She thought she had won Father to her righteousness.) And then, "I don't believe your fat bourgeois bunch would know how to suffer—" The ink seemed to blacken on those words, flinging them out on the paper with an impetus of their own.

How dared he say such things about her family! He who wouldn't stand up for his opinions when Mr. Kenheim opposed them. He who . . . "Pompous materialism." "Roast duck and red damask." Better than his ruthless disloyalty. . . .

Oh, to think that Jack, whom she had loved, could so reveal himself, could so fall short of her ideals. . . .

Oh, Jack! My Jack! Life is a fine struggle. You must have ideals and standards. As certain are they, and as clear, as if they were written in gold upon a scarlet banner. Red damask if you like, but, oh, Jack, read it! Truth is there, and Duty. Service. Fairness. The right thing always. It's a long roll and very beautiful. Yes, obedience is dim. Parents, though parents, may judge wrongly. But, oh, Jack, their teaching is right!

Forever could Abby be grateful to her parents for teaching her to be truthful and unselfish, to do the right thing. And . . . were they wrong in their judgments? Were they?

Aunt Sophie's training had hurt William, but he was working hard now. He was to give his concert next week. Maybe Aunt Sophie's discipline would pull him through. . . .

And were her parents so wrong about Jack? Hadn't she been the blind one?

She scrunched his letter in her hand and began to walk from one end of the pretty Oriental rug to another.

She saw the diamond pattern inlaid on her satinwood magazine stand, and noted a flaw in one tiny yellowish-brown square. She followed the intricate decoration on a piece of Persian velvet on the mantelpiece. In and out, curve and around, zip!

RED DAMASK

What a splendid line that curve made. "If you haven't outgrown them." When she was going to oppose them about Houston House, didn't she think she had? Oh, how could a thing seem right at one time and wrong at another?

Jack had raved about Jews the way Dr. Leopold did, and Dr. Leopold had sounded insincere. Why had she gone to temple, anyway. . . . "Intreat me not to leave thee. . . ." His mother was no Naomi to her Ruth, his father no fine Israel's patriarch. (She wouldn't admit her recoil from Jack's pictures of them, their offense to her fastidiousness.)

So this was her fine knight! A man who could say such things about her family! Her family had loyalties and ideals! How could she love a man who suggested sneaking, who looked down on his own parents, who could call his own father a "bum East Pratt street tailor," his own mother "whining because Mrs. Finkleburg gets a new silk dress, or crying because Mrs. Kelman has fresh chickens twice a week?" He wouldn't let them "bother" her. He was ashamed of his parents. He would hurt them, and he wanted her to hurt her people. He had no fine feelings. Oh . . . he . . . she couldn't love him. She tore his letter into bits and threw them into the waste basket.

Suddenly she felt a wave of depression. Slowly she went down under it, sinking into terror that had no shape, numbed by fears that had no base. Shapeless and baseless were they because she wouldn't admit them. They fumbled, banging against her consciousness, hurling, blinded, because she would not face and direct them. She wouldn't admit a terror of her own strong feelings, feelings that had blinded her to Jack's qualities. She wouldn't see that his qualities repelled her less than his background. Fastidiousness was not written in golden letters on that silk banner, and yet it was a ruling force. She wouldn't face

RED DAMASK

her need of love. And without it she was lonesome and unhappy. What would life hold for her now?

"If she kept true to her best self, that should be enough," she told herself.

Then she stopped striding because her knees were weak. She sank into a chair. Her shoulders hunched. The corner of her stiff linen collar dug into her neck. She didn't feel it.

Depression closed over her, a cold slimy sharp wave that took her into darkness where confusion was, instead of thought. Layer on layer of terror—red terror . . . flaming . . . black-green, dull-green, dull-edged, pushing. . . . Hands clutching at her heart, iron hands, cold-black-wet . . . clutching bony fingers, loosening, tightening, tightening, clutching. . . . Gargoyle's face, grinning. . . . OOm, OOOm, OOOOm—in her ears, like going under ether. Oh, she must get out of this! Out of what? She was frightened. Breath crowded out of her chest and into her throat—a layer of smothering pain there . . . frightened of what?

She dragged herself to her feet and over to the mantelpiece. Holding tight to its cool marble, she stared into the mirror.

She saw brown hair ruffled back from her pale, heart-shaped face, showing her widow's peak. Her eyes, light with fear, yellow-irised, staring. How big the pupils were! How queer those strips of light and dark in the iris! What was that iris made of? What did it see, and why? What was it? What was she? Who was she? Abby Hahl. Abby Hahl. What did Abby Hahl mean? Abby Hahl. Abby Hahl. The more you said it out loud the less it meant. It had no meaning. It was nothing. She was nothing. What was nothing? What was the world? Whirling grayish spheres . . . far off . . . infinity. . . . Horrible endless space. . . . What was it? . . . What was anything?

RED DAMASK

"Abby." She heard Mother's voice in the hall, a welcome voice, bringing her to the outside world, from inside, where darkness was. Such grayish horrid darkness that nothing mattered but escape.

"Abby, why haven't you come down to breakfast?"

Abby flung her arms around Mother's neck. She was eager for talk about everyday things.

So was Mother.

"Oh, Abby, I have such wonderful news for you! I have found the right person at last. Mrs. Bonheim just telephoned. Wasn't it nice of her? So early, too. It's only ten minutes of nine and the office doesn't open until nine. An Austrian. Such a nice person and an excellent cook. She was with Mrs. Ware's sister, Mrs. Riemann, in Chicago, for ten years, and now Mrs. Riemann is going to live in a hotel and the woman—Anna is her name—wants to be in New York. She has a brother here. Oh, I am so relieved! Aren't you glad, Abby?"

"Yes, Mother, so glad. Mother, let's go to see Aunt Aurelia this afternoon. And I have a book I want to take to Aunt Olive."

She had a warm glow of family feeling.

On St. Valentine's day a bunch of violets came with a card inclosed: "St. Valentine's greeting from Gilbert," and in the evening mail was a letter from him:

VIER JAHRESZEITEN, MUNICH, *January 25, 1908.*

DEAR ABBY:

I trust you will receive a St. Valentine's greeting. I left the order with Merne.

We had an agreeable crossing for this time of year, although it was very cool and windy and we could not sit on deck without sweaters under our

RED DAMASK

fur coats. Regina found pleasant dancing company, but I devoted myself to Mother—she misses Father so terribly on these trips.

It will interest you to hear about William Wendel's concert from me, though you must have heard officially from your Aunt Sophie and Uncle Elias. We are staying at their hotel—the Brockfields are here also—and we went to hear him. Your aunt was very much excited over the event. William came out on the platform looking very handsome, but I thought very pale and nervous. You know the way his mouth twitches sometimes. When he started playing the audience was evidently impressed. Mother, who is the musical member of our family, said he played with great musical feeling—Beethoven's Sonata, Opus 90. But at the end of the second movement he got up and smiled and bowed and walked out. The audience was very much puzzled; everybody stirred and coughed and Mother suggested that I ought to go back and inquire. I didn't get to the artists' room because I could hear William's voice and Mrs. Wendel's through the hall. He was half crying, one minute insisting that he had played the third movement, and then he would say that something snapped and he couldn't go back. His mother said he had to go back. I met the doctor—Dr. Bloch, the well-known Zionist, who was with the Judge, and he looked very serious and shook his head when I asked how William was. I went back to Mother and it was announced that William was "indisposed." Since then I have heard that they have taken him to a sanitarium. It was a great disappointment to your aunt and uncle.

To mention more cheerful matters, I hope that M. Paul Bourget's fine address on "Tradition" was copied in the American papers. It has made a great stir on the Continent. He was referring to the present condition of things where the "eternal verities" are being assailed. He expressed himself excellently, I thought. "To live, these people tell us, is to evolve. Exactly so; but it is also to endure." He went on to say how there could be no evolution in the family, monogamy, paternal authority, marriage fidelity, and obedience to parents. I would send you the clipping from the *Soleil* but Mother wants to keep it.

And speaking of flouting tradition, *l'art nouveau* has gone to awful lengths here in Germany. Everybody goes to see a new restaurant in Berlin that is decorated with wooden panels carved by the new "Secessionists." It is a curiosity, but you never saw such hideous distorted human figures and meaningless scrolls and snakes with human heads, etc.

Your father will be interested to hear that the business conditions here

RED DAMASK

are splendid. The workers have a substantial reduction of their working hours and many benefits through labor legislation. It is an object lesson in industrial economics.

Well, this is a long letter, isn't it? I hope you will write soon and follow my example. Do give my regards to all your family, and Mother and Regina send affectionate messages.

As always,

GILBERT.

Eighteen months later Karl told Abby that Jack Bernstein had married a stenographer, a pretty little blonde, dismissed from the Johns Hopkins business office for incompetence. And Jack had refused an instructorship in the Hopkins faculty to become a medical examiner for an insurance company which paid him three thousand dollars a year, two thousand more than he would have received with his opportunity to continue in research work. Karl, who was going to study in Germany with Ehrlich, was disappointed in Jack's commercialism. Karl, amply supplied with money, scorned sacrifices made for it.

He did not know that the pretty little blonde was the daughter of the Mrs. Finkleburg whose silk dresses had made Jack's mother whine. They would never make her whine again. For all the Finkleburgs except Edna had perished in a tenement fire. Edna was incompetent but she was pretty, and she wept on Jack's shoulder—a shoulder alternately shaken with sobs of longing for Abby and squared with clenched teeth and a muttered, "I will get over this!"; a shoulder alternately shrugged with, "I'm lucky to get rid of a girl who has no heart," and drooped with regret for the luxuries Abby's wealth would have brought him. And Edna's tears and their tragic origin (no less tragic than his pogrom-haunted childhood), her loneliness (he was so lonely), and her actual plight aroused his idealism and his tenderness.

RED DAMASK

He married her, renounced his calling, and became an insurance examiner all in one day. It took him three days to regret it.

The news both hurt and healed Abby.

Jack had not been easy to forget.

At first her sense of loss was lulled by the family's allusions to it. "Abby is our fine, sensible girl," they would say. She wouldn't tell them the truth. They thought their influence had swayed her. But she couldn't expose what she had loved. It was her rebellion at having no privacy that hurt and helped to heal also. Then the glimpse of some tall, thin, dark figure in a crowd would start her heart beating at a pace which would slacken with a sort of weary pain. Memories stirred when she saw romantic plays; moonlight in the country pushed at her throat. When she returned from a short spring trip to Europe she closed her eyes to shut out New York's sky line, and then the ache and the memories that would have come from seeing it came anyway.

But after eighteen months Jack had lightly married a pretty little blond stenographer, dismissed for incompetence. And he had tossed aside his high purpose for sordid commercialism.

He left Abby nothing to worship and Abby had need of worship.

The family, who always forgot unpleasantness, had forgotten Jack in a few months and made no more allusions. Abby clung to them. Being attentive gave her something to do, for the Houston House Auxiliary, the Junior Board of the Jewish Infants' Asylum, lectures, art exhibitions, tennis in summer and horseback riding in winter, and social engagements weren't enough. No Hahl or Wendel had a birthday or an anniversary or an illness without a long visit from Abby. No Hahl or Wendel sailed for Europe without fresh eggs and a steamer letter from her.

RED DAMASK

She went to see William Wendel as soon as they brought him out to Leitha Beach that summer, after six months' "rest cure" in the same sanitarium where he had spent six months after the "breakdown" following his concert.

He looked muscular and sturdy. Color, like Madeira wine splashed on a young dead leaf, ruddied his smooth brown face. But it was whispered through the family that you mustn't mention music to him. He cried when it was mentioned.

The family wouldn't face the seriousness of his breakdown. Hahls and Wendels didn't break down. Aunt Sophie defensively blamed his German teachers. They had overworked him.

"Wouldn't you like to come for a drive on Ocean avenue?" Abby asked him.

"I don't know. . . . Isn't it windy, automobiling now?" said William.

"You can wear a coat. William will enjoy the ride," his mother answered for him.

"No. I think I'd better not go. We might have a puncture and Rose Hahl said she'd be coming to see me at five."

"Abby won't take you so far," said Aunt Sophie.

William walked to the window and looked out at the car. "I didn't know Uncle Philip had a new Panhard. Did he get it in France? I suppose if we didn't go so far . . ." he said, rather wistfully.

His mother brought his coat.

"But if we did have a puncture and Rose got here and I wasn't back. . . . You see, I said I'd . . . be home. . . ." He turned helplessly from the clock to the window, from his mother to his coat. "Oh, I don't know what to do!" His voice trembled. Any decision was too much for him.

"Well, I'm afraid I have to be an Indian giver, William," said Abby, inspired by pity. "It's later than I thought and we

RED DAMASK

have to call for Father at the station. We'll take the drive some other time."

"Oh, Abby," said Aunt Sophie, tragically, in the hall, "you can't think what it means to have Victoria married in Indiana!" That was a sorrow she admitted and accepted condolences for. "I almost never see her. Of course John Dodd is a wonderful young man. But it's very hard on us." Tears came to her eyes. A Spartan mother, she wiped them away and smiled. "But don't you think William looks splendid?" she said, cheerfully.

Abby didn't answer; she couldn't answer.

Chapter Six

ABBY and Donna always spent the last week in August at Aunt Olive's camp in the Adirondack Mountains. This year Karl, on a visit from Germany, was going, too. Mother said he "would want to see his Aunt Olive and Uncle Stanley." And Karl obeyed the family rituals when they didn't interfere with anything he wanted to do. Most of the men he admired in Germany obeyed them also. Karl didn't think about them. He thought about antibodies inside the blood, instead.

The three young people were to dine together unchaperoned at the Belmont Hotel before taking the night train for Ermine Lake. Mother frowned at this escapade, sighed and said, "After all, you'll be having dinner before the crowd, and the Belmont is such a nice quiet place. It isn't as if it were the Ritz. And a brother and sister. . . ."

So Abby went to town alone, from Leitha Beach, New Jersey, where her parents had their summer home. She checked her suit case at the station and waited for the others in a big leather chair behind some palms in the Belmont parlor.

Suddenly she heard a man's voice on the other side of the palm.

"Aren't you going to kiss me good-by?"

Should she cough, or come out, or sit still? . . . And then Donna's voice answered: "Oh, somebody might see us. People are coming in here all the time."

"They'll think I'm your brother and that you see me off every Friday."

RED DAMASK

Horried, Abby realized that it was too late to cough now. There was a pause, an unmistakable sound, and then another.

"Ooh! I shouldn't have looked around," said Donna.

"You shouldn't have jumped. You show that this isn't what you do regularly. Don't forget—lunch here a week from Monday at one."

The man left. Donna sat down. Abby came out from behind the palms.

"I'm sorry, Donna. I heard everything," she said, stiffly.

Donna laughed. "Wasn't I silly to jump?"

Abby felt relieved. If she took it like that, it was all right. "Oh, Donna, are you engaged? Tell me who it is!"

"That was Hunter Latimer. You remember meeting him that time at the famous *matinée* party? He's been dandy to me at college. But engaged? Well, not engaged to be married, at any rate. He hasn't a red cent and never will have. I want to be a lady of leisure."

"You wouldn't marry for money!"

"Not exactly. But I can love so many men, I might as well love one who has the wherewithal."

"I don't understand you," said Abby.

"Hush up, honey. Here comes Karl."

By the time they had finished their melon, Karl was telling about the day he thought he was examining typhoid germs. He wondered why they were not motile. Suddenly, just as he recognized them, he spilled a culture and some spattered on his gown. It was glanders bacterium, and glanders was a fatal disease of horses, transmissible to man. Karl told how he looked it up in a textbook and read that more laboratory workers die of glanders infection than of any other.

"What did you do?" asked Abby, breathlessly.

RED DAMASK

"Well, I left my clothes in the laboratory, and went to my room and made my will and wrote out what should be done to continue my experiments."

"What did you think?" asked Donna.

"I thought that it was unfair that I wouldn't be able to find out what I wanted to about antibodies in the blood."

"I love that!" said Donna. "But weren't you the least bit afraid?"

"I thought I was the least bit, but I must have been scared to death, because the next day I got a fever blister and that's the first symptom of glanders in man. Nothing happened, so it must have been just fear. Don't you mention this at home, Abby. No use to have any post-mortem excitement."

At home Karl had not even mentioned his chief. Now he eulogized him. At home he had merely said he was "getting along all right."

Karl's old constraint with Donna was gone. Whenever it approached he banished it with safe thoughts about Wilhelmina, the plump little daughter of one of his professors, who had suggested that marriage was best for a young man and that Wilhelmina would make a wonderful wife.

By the time ice cream was served, Abby was dreaming about having Donna for a sister, a dream she often had renounced because Karl had disliked Donna so.

The next morning Uncle Stanley met them at the station with Cal Torrence and his fast horses, hitched to a three-seated buckboard, according to Ermine Lake tradition.

Then Aunt Olive was at her door to receive them.

"Welcome to Sans Souci," she said, with a beautiful French accent.

The Hardenburg camp had a German name, but Aunt Olive

RED DAMASK

avored the French. She said she had a French soul. America was too crude to appreciate it and her husband's genius, but both were nice to have.

Aunt Olive, Grandfather's only daughter, always did the right thing at the right time. She never read Maeterlinck when Rostand was ordained, nor embroidered when bead work was nobler. She never called before three-thirty in the afternoon nor served a roast at luncheon. Her mother had arranged her own linen closet; so did she. No servant performed any of her duties! She observed every family tradition. She followed every fashion and avoided every fad.

Now she wore a plain piqué skirt and a simple black tie, for simplicity belonged in the mountains.

Three log camps comprised Sans Souci; the main house, the guest house, and the living rooms. They were connected with latticed porticos, and from them boarded walks and stairs led down a well-mown grassy slope to the boathouse and the lake. The boathouse, painted white, was bathhouse also. For the lake was bathed in, boated on, and admired.

An early morning breeze was ruffling its smooth blueness, ruffles edged with rippling, sunlit gold. It was hemmed in by a cluster of mountains, their gentle tips edged with purple mist like scarves of chiffon. Autumn color splashed them—emerald, scarlet, copper; foliage dashed in like Eastern embroidery, for nature was elaborate at Ermine Lake.

But any overhanging bushes were trimmed from the board walk, which bordered the lake for a space, came to a stairway, and ascended to a tennis court where a little rustic pergola held benches for spectators. And beyond was Uncle Stanley's study, reached by a bare mountain path, kept clean of undergrowth by native guides. The guides had captured the antlers in the dining room. They had caught the fish that were mounted

RED DAMASK

over the mantelpiece; and the stuffed birds scattered over the birch-bark walls had been their prey.

After breakfast Aunt Olive took them to Uncle Stanley's new study, but first the view from the main veranda had to be admired and Aunt Olive sighed for Lake Como.

"I've never been abroad," said Donna.

"Never been abroad!" Aunt Olive's pretty eyebrows lifted. Amazed, she halted the procession. "Why . . . Donna, you don't mean it! You must go. *Voyager, c'est vivre.*"

Then they went up to Uncle Stanley's study.

"I wanted Stanley to have a walk built, but he says he won't get his feet wet. And we have the place raked every spring, so you needn't be afraid of snakes," said Aunt Olive.

The study was wainscoted with varnished cedar, so that an engraving of Goethe, a framed scrap of his manuscript, and several etchings could hang on it. Books lined one wall, golden scrolls shining on hand-tooled bindings. Near the roll-topped desk was a big dictionary on an iron stand.

"How's Wilhelm Meister getting along?" asked Karl.

Uncle Stanley frowned. Aunt Olive beamed. "Your Uncle Stanley wasn't satisfied with being a translator. He has work of his own to do. I'm not allowed to talk about it, though."

"Why? Is it secret diplomacy?" asked Karl.

"Karl!" said Abby.

"Belles-lettres," growled Uncle Stanley. "Not the sort of thing that would boom the book department at Philip Hahl & Company!"

"That isn't what Uncle Stanley is striving for!" bragged Aunt Olive.

He didn't know what he was striving for. He knew that his spirit was tuned too subtly for an industrial age. Olive had told him so, and it was pleasant to believe. He had destroyed

RED DAMASK

those old advertising layouts. For fifteen years Olive had told him he was too fine for advertising. For two years he had believed her. And the publication of a new translation of Wilhelm Meister relieved him of that burden, since he wanted to be relieved. What should he do? Fiction was frivolous. Fact was crude. The essay must be his medium. He had every equipment except something to say. He had no convictions except that he was too fine for those among whom he lived, and that America was vulgar, and in such a tasteless industrial age, who wanted to hear about either? Only his Olive would listen to him, always. He was the child she did not have, and her devoted husband. He was her lover, though she tried to keep it from him. She was secretly ashamed of her passionate response.

And now he eyed her appreciatively as she moved about the room, self-consciously giving it a "few feminine touches": pushing the student's lamp one inch to the right, tapping a sofa pillow, her figure curving beautifully as she leaned down. Her fair skin had tinted goldishly from the sun, and her soft black hair, becomingly worn in a curled fringe on her forehead, was drawn back at the sides, since Mr. Kenheim told her she looked like Queen Alexandra. Earnestly she had decided that it was distinguished to adopt one's own coiffure.

Abby watched Uncle Stanley's appreciation and felt lonely.

She felt lonelier still when Karl said, "Donna, let's get a canoe. I'd like to show you a place where I saw a blue heron once when I was a kid."

After they left, Uncle Stanley said, "I'm not a fortune teller, but I prophesy a trip abroad for that young lady before very long!"

"Isn't it interesting, Abby? I never saw Karl notice a girl before. I'd be so pleased if it happened here. Father would be

RED DAMASK

so pleased to have Karl married, and we are all so fond of the doctor. *C'est un gentil mariage.*"

Everybody but Karl knew what was happening to him.

Karl paddled Donna to a small inlet, so shallow it was filled with reeds. The canoe swished through them until it reached a mossy bank. In the background, dimmed by distance, were low mountain ranges, tilted parapets against the world. A cluster of foliage shadowed the water near by, forming a cathedral with sloping spires laid out in dark green on the sunny lake. It reached an old tree stump that stuck up fantastically like a hunchbacked hooded monk. A wild fowl called and was answered. Far off, a waterfall played a rushing tune, softened by its monotony. And some gnats slid straightly from sun to shadow, humming, "Gunun-gum-gum. . . . Gunun-gum-gum. . . . Gunun-gum-gum."

Donna still wore her traveling dress, high-waisted dark green pongee, like a soft slim sheath, like a Jack-in-the-pulpit, and she had its ugly fascination, its note of lazy vitality. Her straight black hair was parted and puffed out at either side, widening the space between large black eyes. Her little nose was specked with freckles. And she smiled the hard sweet smile of a happy child.

Karl put his paddle down, leaned forward, and looked at her. Suddenly his eyes filled with a greenish hazel fire. "Donna, how big your eyes are!" he said, naïvely.

"The better to eat you with, my dear."

And then he reached her somehow; the canoe swayed among the reeds. He kissed her. His safe thoughts of Wilhelmina were forgotten. His theory about antibodies in the blood was forgotten, too.

RED DAMASK

Karl and Donna were late for lunch, but Aunt Olive forgot her chagrin when they announced their engagement. There were kisses and tears and excitement. Telephone calls were made to Mother and Father at Leitha Beach; to Donna's mother, and the Cyrus Hardenburgs near by.

"It's like a hen laying an egg and all the barnyard crowing," laughed Donna, later.

"This time it's a golden egg," said Uncle Stanley, his gray eyes narrowed significantly.

Abby glared at him.

But Uncle Stanley couldn't bear such direct young happiness. Karl had come into his fortune from Grandfather Wendel the year before, a reward for being the eldest grandson. Karl was doing the work he wanted to do. It wasn't fair.

And Donna didn't care what Uncle Stanley said. "Yes. I am so glad Karl has lots of money. I want an automobile and a real seal coat and Santayana's *Life of Reason* right away."

"Let's start with the *Life of Reason*," said Karl, caressively. "There's a moon outside."

Donna had outgrown capture for its own sake.

Abby, thinking and twisting on Aunt Olive's fine linen sheets, waited in the guest house for Donna.

She thought about Donna, her best friend, who now would be her sister. She ought to be glad and she wasn't. The cords of her heart were numb. She remembered Donna's saying, "I might as well love one who has the wherewithal." And already she said she wanted an automobile. Father wouldn't approve of such an extravagance for young people. . . . "This time it's a golden egg," Uncle Stanley had said, meanly. And Abby thought of the way he had looked at Aunt Olive when she was straightening his study.

RED DAMASK

She was alone and lonely.

Oh, why should she think about herself, now?

Of course Donna was not marrying Karl for his money! How different Karl seemed, and in such a short time . . . not as awkward, but just as inconsiderate! Instead of going straight home to the parents, the proper thing to do, he was going up to Lake Placid to see one of his old professors. . . . And Donna was going back to New York to get some clothes because they were to be married in a few weeks and go to Germany without changing any of Karl's plans. They had been so matter-of-fact and practical, immediately after their engagement. And the engagement had been so quick!

Why, only yesterday Donna was kissing Hunter Latimer! It sickened Abby to think of that. "Don't forget—lunch here a week from Monday at one," he had said. Of course Donna wouldn't go with him now that she was engaged. But wouldn't she? You never knew what Donna would do. But she mustn't do that!

Abby sat up in bed and thumped her pillows and sank down again. If Donna didn't break that engagement it would be awful. . . . And now she was on the porch and Karl was kissing her. . . . Always Abby had longed for a perfect friend, who would meet her every thought and make the same decisions, who would understand everything. . . . It wasn't Donna. And yet there was something about her ugly little nose with all those freckles . . . and the jolly way she looked at you . . . her eyes were beautiful . . . and the crisp soft way her lips formed words But she had no standards.

Abby couldn't get engaged to one man the day after she had kissed another!

It was lonely without a perfect friend.

Abby got up and slipped on the pretty yellow silk kimona that

RED DAMASK

Aunt Aurelia had brought her from Japan. You could see every cherry blossom on it in the silvery amber light of that bright moon.

Abby went to the window and looked out.

A mist covered the mountains. But the moon shone on the lake like silver stabs near the shore, and then spread into a rippling blend of silver and black, spreading, moving. . . . It moved straight through to Abby's heart, stabbing her.

She couldn't bear it.

She closed her eyes, and then, as clearly as if he were there, she saw Jack looking at her as Uncle Stanley looked at Aunt Olive, as Karl looked at Donna. Oh, but she mustn't think of him! He was sordid . . . ashamed of his parents. . . . And anyway, he was married. It was wrong to think about him now.

She lit a lamp and got into bed and read Browning's poetry so fiercely she couldn't understand a word of it.

At midnight Donna came in.

"You're not going to have lunch with Hunter Latimer on Monday?" said Abby.

"Why not? I want to tell him the news."

"But an engaged girl . . ."

"Needn't be shut up in a cell."

"Does Karl know?"

"Oh, I'd just as soon tell him unless I thought he wouldn't like it."

"You mean you wouldn't tell him if you thought he wouldn't like it!"

"Uh-huh."

"You'd deceive him!"

"Yah-yus! What a body don't know don't hurt a body."

"But wouldn't your conscience hurt?"

RED DAMASK

"Ain't got no conscience."

"I don't believe you have," said Abby, slowly.

Donna yawned. "Oooh, I'm so sleepy!"

In ten minutes she was sound asleep.

But Abby lay awake. She was sick with disappointment in Donna. Oh, what was the use? She tried so hard to do the right thing, and nothing came right for her. Donna didn't care, and had everything. And yet she wouldn't change places with Donna. She wouldn't want to be like that! Donna was superficial. Sometimes she thought Donna was hard.

Ought she tell Karl?

No. She couldn't do that! They were so happy. How could she spoil it? But oughtn't she? . . . Telling tales was horrid. But a little wrong for a big right? Which was the right thing to do?

How long the night was and how regular was Donna's breathing! There was something sweet about Donna. You couldn't get away from that. And she, like Mildred in Browning's "Blot on the 'Scutcheon," had had no mother. The doctor's wife didn't care about anything but her own looks and getting as much as possible out of the doctor. She had given Donna no training.

Donna would settle down when she was married. And maybe it was right for her to tell Hunter Latimer about her engagement, instead of writing him. It would be a difficult interview for Donna.

Somehow the thought that it would be difficult made it seem less wrong to Abby.

How tired she was! But it was growing light. It was too late to sleep now.

Jack Bernstein came to the wedding in October.

RED DAMASK

It was not a proper wedding. Traditionally, Hahls and Wendels were married by Uncle Elias, the judge. Dr. Leopold married Donna and Karl because Donna said a ceremony was silly unless it were beautiful. She liked the religious ceremony. Traditionally there was a sumptuous banquet with speeches and verses and fish and game and meat. A four o'clock wedding with chicken salad and sandwiches and ice cream and cake served from a buffet seemed almost illegal. Mother defensively said it was a "Southern custom." Uncle Stanley urbanely said, "And a very economical one!" But there was champagne and a wedding veil and tears and the aunts and uncles. Donna and Karl would have preferred friends, but it had to be a small wedding in Dr. Hardenburg's study, and neither wanted a row.

Mother was hurt when Karl invited Jack just because he happened to telephone that he was in New York the day before the wedding.

"When you're not having first cousins and you and Donna are each inviting one outsider, I don't see why you should ask that man," she said.

Mother wasn't worried about Abby. Jack was married, and therefore he was safe.

Mother didn't notice that during the ceremony, from the moment Abby and Jack saw each other, their eyes held a strained sad communion. Their eyes echoed those significant solemn vows of eternal love and unswerving devotion, an echo sent out without the sanction of their minds.

Abby looked so lovely in her maid-of-honor dress. It was pink satin, embroidered in pearls. Pearl tassels hung from its elbow sleeves, and down the long paneled train that swung from her shoulders pearls glistened like patterned frozen tears. The dress glistened, rounding against her bust, clinging against her tapering waist, tightly, like a rosy mermaid's scales. Like a

RED DAMASK

mermaid's tail, her full skirt wrapped around her, and she held her great bouquet of lilies and orchids as if it were a lyre. Her eyes, her darkening, feeling, human, topaz eyes, sought Jack's. But the rest of her tried to escape him. The rest of her swam in a sea of scruples. He was married. She was afraid to think of him or to talk to him.

But when she went out in the hall to join in the scramble for the bride's bouquet, he was at her side. When she went back to the dining room where there was dancing, he came, too. She slipped through the crowd, back to the pantry, and around through the hall to the staircase. He found her.

"Let's sit here for a minute," he begged, and his eyes begged too. Abby couldn't resist them.

They sat on the stairs. Neither could think of anything to say.

Abby's conscience gnawed, dull claws at her heart.

Jack was thinking that a little brown curl back of her pretty ear hovered on a neck so shining and white, so full of life somehow, so kissable, that he ached to kiss it. He couldn't tell her that.

"How are you?" he said.

"I'm just fine. How are you?"

"Oh, I'm fine."

They were silent, a silence noisy with dance music from the dining room.

"I hope they won't play too much of that," said Abby. "Grandfather hates ragtime."

"Rings on her fingers,
Bells on her toes;
She shall have music,
Wherever she goes—"

hummed Jack, tapping his foot in tune.

RED DAMASK

"You know, Donna's like that," said Abby, seizing a safe subject for conversation. "Nothing bothers her. But she's very intellectual," she added, loyally. "She reads philosophy, and she's crazy about astronomy and knows a lot about it. She deserves a lot of credit, because her mother doesn't care about anything but clothes and bridge."

"Tell me about yourself," he said, impatiently.

"Oh, there's nothing to tell. I'm still on the Houston House Auxiliary, and I've just been elected to the Junior Board of the Jewish Infants' Asylum, and I've promised to help with their Christmas play. The management part, I mean. I couldn't act in it! And I'm going to take a course in sociology up at Columbia. It is so hard to know what to think, with all the muckraking in the magazines. I wanted to organize some welfare work at the store, but Father doesn't want me to. Of course they have vacation cottages for the employees. They can go out there week-ends and for their vacations, and . . ." Her voice died away. She could tell that he wasn't listening.

They mustn't sit there, silent on the stairs.

"Are you still with the insurance company?" she asked.

He rubbed his long fingers across his forehead, a familiar gesture that Abby had forgotten she remembered. But it didn't hurt her now. She felt dull and bored.

"No. That's what I'm in New York about. I'm going into private practice."

"Really? Won't you miss your research?"

"Miss it! Terribly!" His voice shook. At that moment he missed it tragically. Often in the last four years he had forgotten it. Spasmodically he had liked his work, though it had been uninteresting. For a short time he could lose himself in anything, and enjoy it if he did it well. But now he felt like a martyr and spoke in the gentle tone of one who has sacri-

RED DAMASK

ficed a career and must be brave about it. "Science isn't for me," he sighed. "I've got a family to support, you know. I have a youngster—a boy."

"Oh! How nice! Er, how is your wife?"

"Very well, thank you."

"What's the matter with Father?"

He's all right,"

somebody sang with the piano.

"Are you going to practise in Baltimore?" asked Abby, hurriedly.

"Not much. In a capitalistic autocracy the city is no place for a poor man. I'm going to be the assistant of a Doctor Steven Sutton in Duncan, Long Island."

Abby stared.

"Duncan! Why, that's a little bit of a place! And pretty far out, isn't it?"

"If you spelled your name with two l's instead of hl, you'd know that it was pretty far in, in another sense," said Jack, cynically. "The Severne Parkes have an estate there, and the Landons, and now that the tunnel across the river is finished and you don't have to take a ferry, more uneasy rich will follow. The men will play too much polo and get hearts and the women will play too much bridge and get nerves, and I shall be there to tell the men that they need more recreation, and the women . . . How's this? 'Ah, Mrs. Landon, you are like a delicate piece of china. You must be handled delicately.'" He put his right hand out, in a gentle, dainty gesture.

If it hadn't been so dreadful to hear him talk like that, Abby would have laughed. She stared at him, horrified, interested in spite of herself.

RED DAMASK

"Doctor Sutton himself has had a stroke. I wish the old gentleman no harm, but it will be some comfort to the community to know that when he passes out, John Burns will be there. You don't know John Burns? You don't know that this is Jacob Bernstein's last day on earth? It would be unfair to burden a fine place like Duncan with a Jewish doctor. Oh, I wouldn't think of doing such a thing!" he mocked.

"You're not going to change your name!"

"The deed is done. The name has never meant anything to me. And my Judaism has never meant anything to me."

"But you used to say . . ."

"Lots of things. I've learned better. The old folks, my parents, get something out of it. They've got a religion. I get nothing but slights and a real handicap in my profession. The fellow who put me wise to this chance at Duncan said a Jew couldn't get it."

"I don't see that you would miss very much!" said Abby.

"I'd miss the best chance I've got for getting on in this world. And I've got the boy to think of, you know. How can you judge? You've always been sheltered. You've never had a struggle. There's Karl. He can go to Germany and study with the best man in his field, and get married and have every comfort, just because he made a lucky choice of fathers. It's a wretched world to push through when you haven't either money or pull, and sometimes you've got to do wretched things to get bread and butter for those who are dependent on you. The squeamish go under in this great democracy of ours!"

"I don't believe it!" flashed Abby.

They glared at each other.

Abby was ashamed that she had ever thought of caring for such a man. She hated him because he violated her memories. And he hated her because she didn't understand him or his

RED DAMASK

capitulation. It had grandeur. He was a splendid sinner, a magnificent martyr to the necessities of a cruel world. Abby was too bourgeois to see the exaltation of such a rôle. But she was so pretty in that gorgeous dress. Her face was shaped just like a heart, and that little curl on her neck. . . . He had to clasp his hands together to keep them away from it.

"Hoch soll er leben," went many voices.

"I think we had better go to the dining room now," said Abby, stiffly.

Karl and Donna were there, saying farewells.

"Did you have a good time with your old beau?" whispered Donna to Abby.

"I did not!" said Abby, indignantly.

"I did, at the Belmont." Donna winked wickedly. And then she turned happily to Karl. "Come on, honey. Let's fly. Aunt Sophie put a pound of rice down my back and it tickles."

Abby went over to Grandfather and took his arm.

The old gentleman believed in weddings as an evangelist believes in revivals. He was ecstatic. In spite of his chubby figure and his round face, he looked distinguished in his new frock coat and the old-fashioned high black stock he always wore on occasions.

"Hoch soll er leben," he sang in his sweet thin voice, perfectly in tune.

He pressed Abby's arm. "I hope yours will be the next wedding, Abby dear."

The next morning Abby was called to the telephone.

"Hello! Is this Abby?" said Jack's voice.

"Yes," she said. She thought, "I will not see him again. How dare he? . . ."

RED DAMASK

But he said, "I just wanted to tell you that the boy makes up for everything."

And that was all.

That winter Abby joined a woman suffrage organization and toiled over a series of tableaux which portrayed women's wrongs. She sold tickets, and Philip Hahl & Company donated half the costumes, getting its name printed on the programs.

Dudley Kenheim bought a box. Newspapers called Mr. Kenheim's handsome grandson a "crown prince of capital." He called himself a philosopher.

"You don't mind if I give the box away, do you? I make it a rule never to go to amateur theatricals and you know how one feels about rules," he teased. "I say, Abby, what would you do if everybody learned how to take care of himself and there wouldn't be any more reform to do, or charity, either?"

"I'd be awfully glad," said Abby. "But since that isn't the case, don't you think those of us who are fortunate ought to help those who aren't?"

"If you didn't, the state might have to. That would be hard on the politicians and we'd have to pay it in taxes instead of amateur theatricals, and you couldn't have a pretty little halo tucked away in your bureau drawer. You know, Abby, you'd miss your halo!"

"And wouldn't you miss your taxes?"

"Good for you! The little halo has sparks. If you ever lose the halo and keep the sparks, let me know. I'd be interested."

Abby shook her head, wondering why so many girls were in love with Dudley Kenheim. He was handsome, but he had no ideals.

Abby read Galsworthy's *Justice* that winter, and joined a prison reform association, though Uncle Elias said making the

RED DAMASK

prisons too comfortable would furnish another motive for crime. She investigated wages at Philip Hahl & Company, for her sociology class, and wondered whether she ought to live on its profits, until she discovered that most stores paid lower wages. Then the hosiery buyer at Philip Hahl & Company told her how Father had paid for her appendicitis operation and her boy's education. He supported her assistant's old mother. Moreover, the organization had Father's enthusiasm. He gave them a cause and a leader. Few were strong enough to resist an emotional partnership in the store. Every cash girl felt like weeping when it rained on the day of a sale. No problem was too petty, no detail too unimportant, for his personal attention; no problem was too vital, no crisis too important, for theirs.

When Abby reported some of this, the class said that slaves had to lie and they had no right to be satisfied in an autocracy, however benevolent. Abby couldn't deny that Father was an autocrat at Philip Hahl & Company. It worried her.

It puzzled Gilbert Ware, with whom she discussed it. Ware's was no autocracy, but its labor turnover doubled Philip Hahl & Company's, with the same wage scale and every department store benefit. Gilbert organized a glee club for the men, a choral society for the women, and a school for the youngsters. Lewis had the store chartered by an efficiency engineer. But while Ware's was not yet losing money, it had stayed in Twenty-third street too long, and there was no growth, no enthusiasm to share.

But Abby, busily, admired Gilbert's activities there. Busily, she studied Italian, and went to art exhibitions and lectures and concerts and poured tea at one engagement reception after another.

Aunt Sophie's wonderful Julia was engaged to a wonderful

RED DAMASK

lawyer in the same Indiana town where Victoria lived—a joy, since Julia was getting on in years and going off in looks; a calamity, since she, with her sister, would be separated from the parents. But Aunt Sophie's two sons were united to the two Goodman girls, daughters of "that fine old banking family" of Baltimore. Elinor Riemann married Max Hardenburg. George Hahl's eldest son married a German girl. Marian Kenheim married Richard Brockfield.

"Is it true that David Brockfield gave a theater party for you last Wednesday? To see *Chanticleer*, I heard. What does that mean, Abby dear?" asked Aunt Aurelia.

Abby shook her head. "Nothing, Aunt Aurelia. I'm going to be an old maid, a nice old auntie for the children. Isn't Rose Kenheim's baby a darling?"

She went to see it bathed, a family ceremony, and Aunt Aurelia said, "What's this I hear about your going up to New Haven to the football game with Gilbert Ware and his Chicago cousins? Any news for us, Abby?"

Abby blushed. She didn't love Gilbert, but she knew that he loved her.

Grandfather, Father, Mother, and Abby were dining alone one evening in February, when a letter came from Donna.

Abby looked up from it with flushed face and shining eyes. "I have some news for you!"

Grandfather looked up. "Not . . ."

"Yes!"

"Read us the letter," said Father.

Abby hesitated. "You know Donna writes funny letters."

"Oh, go on and read it," said Father.

Abby cleared her throat, and read in a trembling voice:

RED DAMASK

"The family will be delighted to hear that I am horribly nauseated every morning. My color is pea green, and temper worse. Karl escapes to the laboratory, which seems to need him suddenly for night work. And a nice young German with a cute squint, who lives at this *pension*, takes me to a marvelous observatory where an angelic old astronomer is looking for comets. It is a pleasant search and very comforting. I couldn't do it in the mornings, however. Nausea overwhelms even the heavenly bodies, as far as I am concerned.

And so to business, Abby darling. You break the news to my mother. You could do it so sweetly. Lead up to it gradually. The fair Isabel would rather meet a burglar than a grandchild. In fact, the Lady is hell on burglars."

Abby coughed. "You know Donna doesn't mean anything . . ."

Grandfather nodded happily. "The ladies are always a little queer . . ." And then remembering that Abby was a maiden he stopped and flushed.

"Go on," said Father.

"Once one broke into our house at Harville and Mother charmed him so that he wanted to give her a ring he had stolen. Of course she spurned it. It was only garnets. But for years he used to send her a post card of Niagara Falls on the anniversary of the occasion. He seemed to have the Hahl feeling for anniversaries. Maybe he was related. Do ask Grandfather if there are any burglars in the family. My interest is eugenical now. Tell Mother that I swear the chi-eld shall call her sister."

There was a silence.

"I can't understand a woman not wanting a grandchild," said Mother.

"Donna doesn't mean it," said Grandfather. "She likes to joke."

"I don't think it's Abby's place to tell Mrs. Hardenburg," said Mother.

"We must send them a cable," said Grandfather, taking a seat at Mother's desk. "How's this? 'Overjoyed at news. Oul.'"

RED DAMASK

"Oul" was a code always used on family cables, meaning, All Our Love. "Just ring for Otto, Abby. He should take it out at once." He clapped his hands together softly.

Mother, who always considered her servants first, remembered a point of family etiquette that would spare Otto. "Father, I don't think they should hear from us before Donna's mother has been told."

"Quite right, Erna. Quite right. Abby should go over the first thing in the morning. Then when Mrs. Hardenburg has been told, I will take the cable and send it myself. Abby can telephone the word. I must write to Karl, too. And I will tell him that he should be patient with his wife at such a time. He shouldn't go to the laboratory at nights. His work can go a little slower."

"I don't think it could be good for Donna to crane her neck looking through a telescope," said Mother. "She should spend her evenings at home at such a time."

"And her husband should be with her," insisted Grandfather.

Father didn't say much. He was hoping that it would be a grandson who would realize his duty to Philip Hahl & Company.

When Abby kissed Grandfather good night, he whispered: "Now I have only two wishes—that you and Marina should each find your husbands. Don't you think Gilbert Ware is a fine young man?" he added, wistfully.

Fearing a rebuff, Gilbert hadn't proposed to Abby. She never had encouraged him.

But lately she seemed different, gentler, more sympathetic.

Gilbert had earned a Phi Beta Kappa key at college. That took no initiative. And in business, competition tired instead of stimulating him. He always had had money, and since he didn't

RED DAMASK

care for power, making more didn't interest him. He had nothing to struggle for. Of course, he stayed in Twenty-third street from nine until six every day, as did Lewis, whose heart was in his pleasures. The store ran automatically.

Gilbert had outgrown his boyish delicacy, but his mother still fussed over him. And yet he wasn't spoiled. His eyes met yours straightly; clear gray they were, like the wings of a dove. His mind wasn't original or spontaneous. It was able and logical. His interests were sincerely cultured. So was his taste. He could offer everything but excitement.

And he knew his chance with Abby.

No maid, as usual, could call for Abby at the Kenheims' mid-winter ball. Hilda had a cold and Anna had a night out. "Gilbert and Regina will bring you home," said Mother.

But Regina, despite Gilbert's conscientious entreaties and cool looks from the chaperons, left the ball early with the Ringler boys, bound for Rector's, where nice girls didn't go in 1911. So Abby and Gilbert were alone in the Wares' limousine.

"Shall I tell Morton to drive around the Park?" he asked.

"Yes," said Abby.

She wore a brown velvet wrap edged with ermine, built in tiers like an opera house. Mother insisted on evening hats; Abby's was gold satin trimmed with pink feathers, like a fat ostrich perched on a lampshade, but Gilbert, who never rebelled against current taste, thought she looked beautiful. When he bent down he could see one of her eyes. It wasn't forbidding.

The limousine wound around shining gun-metal lanes, some darkened by clumps of black-blue trees, some lightened by glimmering pearly Park lamps. Cars passed them silently. No grasshoppers sang; no frogs called in the lakes; no whippoorwills pealed from the trees. Only their muffled motor whined above the city's measured drone.

RED DAMASK

Gilbert took off his high hat for the proposal, remembered the night air was dangerous, and put it on again.

"Your influence would be so wonderful for Regina," he began. "She never means any harm, you know. But Mother doesn't understand her. She needs a sister so."

On the front seat, Morton looked straight ahead. Gilbert looked straight ahead and Abby looked straight ahead. She knew what was coming, wanted it, and hoped about it, vague hopes she didn't analyze. She glowed to his beginning. He was inspired to suggest a mission. He knew Abby wanted a mission.

But then he took off his glove and reached for her hand. Through her glove she felt it, loose, trembling. "Could you . . ." he mumbled. He leaned down and kissed her, his lips smooth and cool, too smooth, too cool.

She drew away. She couldn't help drawing away. She wanted to open the door of the car and run down that grassy slope, to be alone. She wanted to get away from Gilbert. And she was almost as sorry for herself as she was for him.

"Oh, Gilbert! I can't! I can't! I can't!"

Gilbert could see tears in the one eye that he could see. And he tried in vain to comfort her.

Alone, later, Abby tried to understand why she couldn't marry Gilbert.

He had ideals. He kept his banner floating. Duty and service and truth were written on it, and purity and character. "Oh, Gilbert! Couldn't we be happy together?" she thought. "With a home of our own, and children, sharing the same ideals for them and for ourselves? Both of us want to serve others; both of us want to live worth-while lives. Oh, Gilbert! Why isn't it there—that magic something? Oh, why can't you give it to

RED DAMASK

me, when you can give me everything else? Why, oh, why, Gilbert?

"And why is marriage wrong without it?

"You have all my traditions, Gilbert, all my standards!

"But, oh, why do I want to run, run, run far away when I think of marrying you?

"Why, oh, why?"

Chapter Seven

DR. HARDENBURG ordered the Hahls to stay quietly at Leitha Beach instead of going to Europe in May, as usual, because Grandfather hadn't been well. Gretchen, Tressa's successor as the vestal virgin for family rites, had married. Mother's new cook liked to make paté-de-foie-gras salads and cheese cakes and lobster entrées, strains on Grandfather's digestion. But Mother said, "I'm afraid Gretchen won't stay if we don't let her show what she can do. She's such a wonderful cook. *Gott halte Sie gesund.*"

And Grandfather was worried, too. Abby, his favorite, was unmarried at twenty-two. He suspected the reason for Gilbert's trip to Italy in February. But when Mother asked if Gilbert had proposed, Abby, who wouldn't lie, lost her temper. Abby, the dutiful daughter, said, "It isn't fair for you to ask me that!" And there had been a scene. Grandfather hated scenes. Marina Hardenburg wasn't married, either. She was too absorbed in her studies. Karl wouldn't bring Donna home for her confinement, and Grandfather hated to miss the first sight of a great-grandchild. William Wendel had had another breakdown. Then Uncle Stanley, interested in the Baconian cipher, wrote a letter to the New York *Sphere*, repeating Emerson's theory about Shakespeare's contrast to the general rule; other admirable men had lived in keeping with their thoughts. Shakespeare hadn't. Uncle Cyrus naturally opposed the Baconian cipher. (It was an excellent family battleground.) He said history was filled with such contrasts, whereupon Uncle Cyrus accused him of

RED DAMASK

arguing in favor of immorality. Grandfather had to make peace between them, an effort, after a dinner that began with tomatoes stuffed with caviar and anchovies.

Now he was on a strict diet. The Deckers were in southern France, the Hardenburgs in Norway. William Wendel went to a new sanitarium; and Marina Hardenburg was spending the summer at Leitha Beach, with Abby, together, as cousins should be. And Grandfather had a plan for Abby. His health improved as he watched it mature.

Dudley Kenheim, whom it concerned, also watched it mature. He was used to watching such plans. They always amused him.

He was the only son of Mr. Kenheim's eldest son. And as if that weren't enough, he looked like a *matinée* idol. His body was tall and slender and supple. His nose was straight and pointed; his thin lips had pointed edges, and his chin pointed, too. He was black-haired and lavender-eyed. His eyes were curiously enchanting. Sometimes keen and humorous, they could send out lilac fire that scorched if it didn't burn, disastrous to feminine hearts, relieving Dudley of further effort. That he was always relieved of effort was his tragedy.

He excelled at golf and tennis without trying. His judgment was sought at his grandfather's office, because it was sound. He was a natural connoisseur. Art dealers recognized an expert in control of his Grandfather's great collection. He read the best books because he liked them. He went to the best concerts. He drove the best racing cars and wore English clothes and used French soaps because they were best. He loved quality and resistance and got little of the latter.

Abby started with it.

Grandfather asked Mother to invite him for dinner. Seated next to him, Abby wore a lovely dress and a distant manner. Dudley was spoiled and fast and cynical, and she resented Grand-

RED DAMASK

father's saying: "There are not many young people at Leitha Beach this summer. We will have to plan some enjoyment for you. Suppose we arrange a sailing party for Sunday," he beamed.

"Father, I wish you wouldn't make it a sailing party. I never feel comfortable with Abby in a sailboat," said Mother.

"All right, Erna. We'll make it a beach party. Abby won't drown in the sand."

There was dutiful laughter.

But Abby did not go to the beach party. She had promised to visit an elderly relative who was summering near by. And Grandfather fumed between disappointment and approval of visiting elderly relatives.

Dudley Kenheim was annoyed and attracted by Abby. Out of deviltry he devoted himself to Marina Hardenburg. Nothing else could inspire such devotion.

Marina's nose was too big and her eyes were too small. Her hair was frizzy and her skin too dark. And a disagreeable personality intensified her homeliness. She constantly scorned men because they didn't admire intelligence. In fact, she adored men secretly, and her intelligence was memory. But she patronized Abby, who hadn't been to college. From childhood Marina had been spiteful to her cousins, but they had to play with her, anyway. Family solidarity gave her an artificial world that would stand for spitefulness. When the real world resented it, she was bewildered. But she drudged at her books, and her father saw influential friends and Grandfather gave a scholarship to Beele College for women. Marina was made assistant instructor in history there.

"I think it's too bad for Abby not to do anything but just sit back and wait for a husband," she told Dudley.

"Do you think they have to be waited for?" he teased, sending out his lilac fire.

RED DAMASK

It was fatal to Marina. Fatally burned, she turned coy. "Sometimes they have." And she fought inner turmoil with habits. "I should think you'd want to accomplish something in the world. If I were a man I wouldn't be satisfied to be nothing but a rich man's son," she snapped.

"I'm so glad you're not a man. Think what we would have missed," said Dudley, wickedly.

She followed him all over the beach. When he gathered driftwood for the fire, she helped him. She sat next to him during supper and insisted on buttering his egg.

Eleven o'clock was the bathing hour at Leitha Beach.

On Sunday morning Abby, in a black satin bathing suit with a striped dickey touching her tanned throat and a full skirt covering her pretty knees, was waiting for Marina to come out of the bathhouse. Marina's toilets were prolonged since the beach party.

Rose Hahl Kenheim and her husband (Dudley's cousin) were digging a sand cave for their small son. David Brockfield and Elinor, his sister-in-law, joined them and beckoned to Abby. They began to discuss modern art.

"Why should the artist throw away everything that he could learn from the Renaissance? What's the use of returning to barbarism?" said Abby.

Dudley Kenheim came along the sand back of her. He flung himself down beside the baby and flipped pebbles into the cave, his long fingers carelessly perfect of aim. Abby watched them.

"I saw the exhibition at the Grafton Gallery in London last winter," he said. "Matisse, Gauguin, Van Gogh. Why, those fellows violate every rule of art!"

Abby nodded. "And they haven't the intensity of the old masters."

RED DAMASK

"But isn't Roger Fry a great authority on painting?" asked Elinor, dubiously. "He organized that exhibition."

"Well, he organized an orgy of ugliness. Don't they see any beauty to paint?" said Dudley.

"How about Rembrandt's old lady paring her nails?" asked David Brockfield.

"Oh, Rembrandt! A genius can make ugliness beautiful. But I don't see anything like that going on nowadays."

Abby agreed sympathetically. She took her opinions seriously and Dudley shared them. Suddenly, as if something spoke inside her, she was aware of, "Why, how purple your eyes are!" She had an impulse to cry it aloud.

She was aware of that purple gaze warming her; of the waves in the sea writhing like sportive dragons, blue and green and spangled with sunlight, laughing, frothy-jawed, breaking in rainbows of spray, before they slid back to writhe again. The sky was cloudless, a dome of dancing particles, azure blue and light bright gold. She heard voices calling gay welcomes, and the prattle of children at play. She heard pretty Rose Kenheim, who always proclaimed the obvious: "Rembrandt was a fine painter!" She laughed with the others, a merrier peal than theirs. She felt light, charged with some thin, glad elixir.

She stood, hands stretched high above her head, poised, taut, unconscious. The wind curved her bathing suit around slender hips; it clasped her pointed young breasts. In tune with some unheard rhythm she ran across the sand and into the sea.

Dudley Kenheim followed her.

Both had forgotten Marina.

They weren't allowed to forget her.

Everywhere Abby went, Cousin Marina went. Marina and David Brockfield or one of the Ringlers played golf or tennis

RED DAMASK

with Abby and Dudley. Marina and a fourth went with them on motor trips to dine at small inns near Leitha Beach and to dances at the Oakstone Country Club. Mother thought they should be chaperoned, but Grandfather said a foursome was proper.

Grandfather was better, but not well yet. For week after week went by. Friends begged significantly for news. Aunt Aurelia, who had heard "rumors," wrote from Europe for it. There was none.

Every time Abby came home she met questioning looks from Mother and Grandfather, cold dark stabs through her rosy haze. They annoyed her. Abby, the sweet-tempered, avoided them or snapped at them.

Marina was annoying, too.

At first she tried to appropriate Dudley.

She took the front seat in his automobile until he said: "I mustn't be selfish with you, Marina. I know David wants to hear about the fall of Rome. Abby, here's your seat. Come on," he would say, imperiously.

And Abby came. Her distant manner gone, she adapted her moods to his moods, eager to fit his every whim.

She danced the "Boston dip" with him at the Oakstone Country Club, though she and the chaperons disapproved of it. But what was disapproval when her veins swooped with the strains of a waltz? What was disapproval when she felt the delicious pull of Dudley's arms as she swayed with him, gliding, spinning, dipping, soaring, merging, two bodies mingled, tangled in that languorous tune:

Oh-h-h, you-u-u, beau-ti-ful lad-y-y,
Ta-tum-m, te-tum-m,
Ta-ta-ta, tee-ta-ta, ta-ta-ta, tee-ta-ta. . . .

RED DAMASK

The club room's white woodwork, its gray wall paper, its wicker chairs and watching faces, the perspiring fat man who played the piano, the thin one who quivered with his violin, disappeared for Abby. She heard music. She felt Dudley's arms. That was all. Her body seemed to melt into pulses, to disappear, leaving a light thin glad spirit floating to Dudley's humming:

"Oh, you beautiful lady,
I love you, too!"

They left the dance floor and wandered over the golf links. There was no moon and the stars were dim. They sat on a bunker, and he kissed her, tenderly at first, softly, lightly, like a child's kiss; but it grew faster, faster, harder, harder, and the rougher it was the more she wanted it.

She forgot that Dudley Kenheim was fast and spoiled and cynical.

At home she remembered that he hadn't proposed to her. Marina came into her room.

"I think I ought to tell you, Abby, that Mrs. Dernburg said she was surprised at the way you were dancing. I overheard her talking to Mrs. Ringler in the dressing room. She said that she wouldn't be surprised if Regina Ware danced like that, but you always set such an example."

Abby took hairpins out of her hair and said nothing.

"And Mrs. Riemann said she wondered if they wouldn't be hearing some news pretty soon. That she thought it was time."

"I think it's time for people to attend to their own affairs if they have any!" said Abby.

"Is that meant for me?" sniffed Marina, whose feelings were hurt easily.

RED DAMASK

Abby shrugged and unstrapped her high satin shoes.

Abby hated Marina for questioning her; she almost hated Mother and Grandfather for their questioning looks; she almost loved Father for his indifference, his usual absorption in the store. He didn't bother her and she hated being bothered when life was so wonderful, so beautiful, so magic. She never thought of hating the cause of the bother.

Hate Dudley? Why, he was all her dreams come true! How absurdly she used to misunderstand him. She didn't analyze him now. To think of him was to feel thrilly quivers around her heart. She didn't think about his character; she thought about his eyes, his curiously fascinating lavender eyes, and the way they turned purple when you looked into them deeply, or she thought about his habit of humming under his breath when he danced, nonchalantly unaware of being exquisitely in tune, surely unaware that his voice tapped at every pulse. She could see him walk into the room with his insouciant manner, his careless grace. And then she would listen for the telephone, dashing to answer it, to meet Hilda's insulted look and Mother's complaint that Abby must let Hilda answer the phone! She watched the clock to count the hours before his coming, and lately the minutes.

Hypnotized, bewitched, she wore a cap of lovely darkness that only one glaring fact could yank at. He had not proposed.

Oh, why? Why?

It was full-moon time in August.

Dudley telephoned Abby: "I'm coming over tonight. Let's not go anywhere. It's too hot. And, Abby, can't you check Cousin Marina?"

Marina was hard to check.

Abby went to Marina's room. "What are you going to do tonight?" Abby asked her.

RED DAMASK

"Why?"

"Dudley telephoned that he was coming over."

"Well, I'm glad he's coming. I want to show him how wrong he was the other day. He insisted that Jena came before the battle of Austerlitz. I looked it up, though I knew I was right." Marina nodded happily.

"There's going to be a full moon tonight," said Abby, shyly.

"A full moon? Does the almanac say so?"

Oh, why wouldn't Marina understand? Abby didn't know that Marina didn't want to understand, nor did Marina know it.

Abby felt goaded. But her wish was stronger than embarrassment, since hope sang in her heart. She reddened; her throat felt dry. "Marina . . . you won't mind, I know . . . but I'd love . . . I'd like to be alone with Dudley this evening." How brazen those words sounded!

Marina reddened, too, a painful red, staining her dark skin. "I'll be very glad to stay in my room. I wouldn't be in your way for anything," she said, stiffly.

"That isn't necessary!" How annoying Marina was! "Couldn't you write some letters in the library or something?"

"Do you want me to lie? I have no letter to write. I wrote to the parents yesterday. But don't worry, Abby, I won't be in your way." Marina pursed her lips.

Abby left the room.

Marina followed her.

"Female decked for the market place," she sneered when Abby told Paula, the maid, to press her yellow chiffon, her favorite dress.

Abby didn't answer.

She didn't go to the station to meet Father's train from New York according to her daily custom. Instead, Marina went.

Abby tried to rest. But Mother came in to tell her that Paula

RED DAMASK

had asked for an extra day off, and if she gave it to her the others would want one. But she couldn't refuse Paula.

"Of course, with a personal maid you have to make concessions. I don't know how I'll find enough for her to do when . . . when you have your own home once. It would have been too much for Anna and Hilda without her, but if you . . . I suppose I could let Paula take charge of the linen closet, though I never would trust it to Anna, and she might be hurt. Oh, you're going to wear that yellow chiffon tonight. It is a beautiful dress. That shirred effect over the shoulder is very flattering. Mrs. Traill does well for you. I think we'll have to let her make the wedding dress."

"Mother!"

"Abby, you needn't be embarrassed for your own mother. It is strange, though, that he hasn't said anything. I don't understand Dudley Kenheim."

Abby said nothing. She could think of nothing to say.

The Hahls' house at Leitha Beach had three pointed gables in front, ornamented with fretwork balconies. Painted gray, it stood high on a graded terrace of grass, minutely manicured. At one side was a tennis court inclosed in wire netting, with a small green pergola for spectators. From it a gravel walk led to a sunken garden where red roses grew on lattices and nasturtiums and geraniums grew in circles and squares around a star-shaped plot of dahlias. A few shrubs were symmetrically spaced on the smooth green lawn which was hemmed by a tall hedge, clipped to represent posts at the corners and sloped to a sharp edge between.

An iron gate met the board walk outside, which bordered a macadamized road, as glossy as slate-colored glass. Many automobiles and an occasional carriage glided over it, past similar

RED DAMASK

mansions on lawns similarly manicured. Beyond the road, horizontal with it, was the beach, swept clean of driftwood. Nothing had been done to the ocean.

Neither clipped nor swept nor spanned, it boomed and sighed and crashed, drowning the clatter of hoofs, the chug-chug of motors, and the screech of Father's train.

Abby listened to it while Paula brushed her hair until it went copper-colored at the crest of its brown waves, until gold lights came into the cluster of curls arranged at the back of her head like tassels on a silk turban.

"How well you look, Miss Abby!" said Paula.

Abby was glad she looked well. She met her own eyes in the mirror, shining eyes, smiling eyes, yellow-irised, a little darker than her dress. And its dainty puffs of chiffon and ruffles of lace defined the curve of her bust and her slim hips softly, clinging, like sunlight on a flower. Her cheeks were flushed, her lips were red, and her ears heard the ocean say:

"Tonight. Oh, he'll tell you tonight. Tonight. Oh, he'll tell you tonight."

Paula went away.

Abby heard the front door slam and Father's voice shouting and feet running up the stairs. Her door knob rattled as if the hand that moved it trembled. Marina came in, dragging an open newspaper.

"Look!"

Abby looked. "'Reciprocity Complications in Ottawa.' Won't that please Uncle Stanley? He had such an argument with Uncle Cyrus." She read, and she laughed gently.

But the laugh choked in her throat. "Oh!"

For Marina's shaking finger was pointing to: "Sugar King's Grandson Sued. Breach of Promise Suit. Brought by Dolly Dawson. Broadway Belle Sues Dudley Kenheim."

RED DAMASK

Abby read the article through, but something said: "This isn't happening. It couldn't happen."

"I don't believe it," she said, scornfully.

"They wouldn't print it if it weren't true," said Marina. "I think you're lucky to find out in time . . ."

Abby turned on her. For one delicious blinding moment she knew nothing, felt nothing, thought nothing but red folds of anger.

She let herself go.

She stamped her foot. "What do you know about it? What do you care? Oh, I could shake you, do you hear? Trying to be mean. That's what you do. You just try to be mean. Oh, you go out of this room and let me alone! Quick! Do you hear!"

Marina went.

Abby, trembling, exhilarated, walked the floor, thinking of more things she could have said to Marina, hating Marina, feeling her cheeks burn, her ears scorch.

The paper was open on her dressing table.

She saw it. She stopped. She reached for it stealthily, as if she were watched. She read it. The words wouldn't sink into her brain, though she made a conscious effort to push them in. They separated, making no sense.

She read it again, whispering it, like a child learning a lesson. She flung the paper away. It opened at another page where there was a picture of Dudley. It was his straight pointed nose, his thin lips, his pointed chin, and those eyes were his.

"It's true," murmured Abby, dully, aloud.

"That's why he hasn't proposed to you," something told her. She heard steps in the hall.

Oh, why couldn't they let her alone!

Mother and Grandfather came in, Father lingering behind.

RED DAMASK

Mother kissed Abby.

Abby looked beyond at the door. She made a little inarticulate sound in her throat, and turned and ran into the bathroom, her only refuge.

Its walls were tiled to the ceiling, rounded there, bland, blue-white, immaculate, glistening in the twilight, a luxurious, sanitary cell. The last red rays of the sun glittered harshly on its nickel fittings, polished so brilliantly that it hurt your eyes to look at them.

Abby stood in front of the washbasin, at bay. She saw her face reflected in a shining nickel knob, distorted, narrowed at the forehead, widened at the mouth, the pretty lace at her neck solidified like a patterned chain.

Staying there wouldn't help. They would wait for her. She had to go back and face them. Oh, why couldn't they let her alone?

She heard Grandfather's voice:

"Erna, I think you'd better speak to her. Tell her not to take this too seriously. Boys will be boys. This situation has been handled badly. I am surprised at my old friend, Mr. Kenheim. I thought he was looking worried lately. Yesterday when we were playing skät, with a handful of trumps he threw his ten spot on Mr. Brockfield's Jack of clubs. Szo! It'll relieve Abby's mind to hear about the trip. She'll be glad to see Donna. And it will be so nice for Donna to have the family with her when she's not feeling so well." Grandfather's voice was growing cheerful. "Then we might take Abby to Spain later. When we get home it will all have blown over. A nine days' wonder, these things."

"I wonder if it would be better to close this house and let the servants go to town or . . ." mused Mother.

Abby came in, closing the bathroom door behind her.

RED DAMASK

"Don't go, Grandfather. I want to know what you meant," she said. "I heard what you said. But I don't understand."

Was it possible that she didn't know? Grandfather stared at the paper, still in her hand. Marina had told them how upset she was. She was very white. Her eyes looked like holes in a blanket. Grandfather didn't like to see them.

"No, Abby, I think we'll leave you to your Mother now."

Abby stood with her back to the dressing table, facing him where he sat on the chaise longue. "No, I want to know what you mean about not taking this seriously."

Mother sat down. "Why, Abby dear. It's better for a young man to sow his wild oats before he's married than afterward!" said Grandfather.

"But how can I marry him?" puzzled Abby.

"Abby, don't be a fool!" said Father with more heat than light.

"But it's Dudley's duty to marry this girl." Abby sighed wearily as if she had been thinking about it for years.

"Abby, are you crazy!" said Father.

Grandfather looked touched. He got up and put an arm around Abby. "Such an innocent little girl," he said. "You don't know the ways of the world. It's proper that you shouldn't. Dudley has been foolish. But this is some unscrupulous woman. A young man in Dudley's position is a target for women like that."

"Do you mean that Dudley hasn't made love to her?"

Mother blushed.

"I wouldn't go into such matters, Abby," said Grandfather, too embarrassed at having to mention them to a maiden to notice that the maiden was turning into a white-faced fury. "Men will be men. And they make the best husbands afterward," he nodded.

RED DAMASK

Rage flooded Abby's formulas.

Her eyes blazed at the three of them. "How about all the standards and ideals you've taught me? How can you talk like that? Doing the right thing. Character. Not being worldly. Thinking of others. Dudley Kenheim has done wrong. And you think a little time will make it right. Is this what your preaching amounts to? Just because he's a Kenheim. If this had happened to Jack Bernstein you wouldn't excuse it so easily. But its being Dudley makes it different! And it's all right for this girl to suffer so that he'll make me a good husband? Do you think I'll stand for that?" Abby paused for breath.

"Abby, don't be disrespectful to your grandfather!" said Mother. "Don't mind her now. She's a little excited."

"I am excited. What do you think it means to lose your faith in your family and to have this happening at the same time? Do you think I'll ever listen to you again when you talk about Hahl and Wendel traditions?"

"Abby! Be silent. You don't know what you're saying. I won't listen to any more of this." Father strode from the room.

"I'll send up a tray, Abby. You needn't come downstairs for dinner if you . . ."

"I'm going downstairs this minute to telephone Dudley that he must marry that poor girl!" Abby followed Father.

"Abby . . ." Mother called helplessly.

"It's all right," Grandfather whispered. "Dudley can handle her. Leave it to that young man."

Abby had to convince the Kenheim's butler and Dudley's valet that she was not a reporter.

Finally Dudley's voice answered, jauntily: "Hello, Abby! Have you seen my Rooseveltian headlines?"

RED DAMASK

"Dudley, can you come over to see me? I want to talk to you," said Abby.

"I had every intention of coming. Didn't we have a date?"

He was glad to get away from his grandfather's reproaches and his father's dismay. His grandmother went to bed and summoned Dr. Hardenburg. His grandfather reproached himself for not meeting Dolly Dawson's demands. His lawyer had been unwise. This fiasco hurt Mr. Kenheim's Napoleonic vanity, making him furious at Dudley. And Dudley's father kept saying, "Oh, how fortunate that your mother didn't live to see this day! My God! Oh, how fortunate that your mother didn't live to see this day!"

They were not cheerful company.

At the Hahls', Hilda showed him into their red damask sun parlor where Abby, alone, awaited him.

She sat straightly, primly, on the edge of the sofa.

Oh, no matter what he had done, he was wonderful! The curve of his sharp-edged lips, the way he walked, that quick long step, and the smile in his eyes, his wonderful eyes. . . .

He took her hand.

She hoped he wasn't hurt. She couldn't bear for him to be hurt.

"What a pretty dress, Abby!" He drew close to her on the sofa. He put his arms around her.

Quickly she drew away.

"No, Dudley. I want to talk to you."

"You, too. All right. Fire ahead and get it over with." Dudley looked bored.

"I just want to tell you that I think it's your duty to marry that Miss Dawson right away."

Dudley threw back his head and laughed.

"That's a good one. You are a sweet child. But you don't know Dolly. She doesn't want to marry me any more than I

RED DAMASK

want to marry her! She's after some money, and, damn her, she'll get some before she's through, I'm afraid. Take my advice, Abby, never write anything. Always sign letters, yours very respectfully. Remember that, from your Uncle Dudley."

Abby separated the lace ruffles on her dress, pushing the gatherings carefully, first to one side and then to the other. She flushed miserably and swallowed.

"Haven't you . . ." Her voice strained and caught.

"Compromised her? Of course! But the men who've compromised Dolly would make quite a convention. She just thought she saw an easy mark in yours truly and tried a little blackmail. We told her to go to the devil, and she went to the New York *Beam*. I guess they gave her more than we would have. But she'll lose this suit, you know."

"A lot of wrongs doesn't make one right," said Abby, firmly. "If you've done wrong, I think you ought to marry her. I want you to," she added.

He turned to her, hating her. He hated her for failing him, for loving him. She was like all other girls. He wanted to want somebody. He couldn't want anybody who wanted him. It was his tragedy to get everything he wanted and never to want what he got. And now Abby was acting as if she had a claim on him. That was unforgivable.

"Now listen, Abby," he said, coldly. "It is very kind of you to take all this interest in my affairs. I'm sure I don't know why you should. Of course we have been good friends this summer. We've had some fine times together. But evidently you don't know me very well, or you'd know that I wouldn't marry Dolly or anyone else. I'm not interested in marriage. What's the use, tying oneself! I've never met a woman yet who was worth it, and I've met quite a few." He stood.

Abby stood also.

RED DAMASK

Shame, a fiery cloak, covered her. Lined with pride, it scorched her, and yet through it something comforting kept saying: "Why, this isn't happening to you! It couldn't happen to you."

"I'm sorry I have interfered," her voice said. She wondered where it came from.

"Oh, that's all right," said Dudley, easily. He liked never to linger on unpleasantness, and Abby, facing him in that soft yellow dress, with her eyes distended and her head high, looked very pretty.

He put his hand on her shoulder.

It trembled.

"Come on. Give me a kiss. It's rather a nuisance, all this. I need a little consolation." He kissed her.

She blistered with shame. She loathed him, she loathed herself, and yet his lips hard on her lips were ecstasy. She couldn't draw away from him. He kissed her again. "You're very nice," he murmured.

She felt her knees weaken. His touch, like a hundred swords, stabbed her with bliss, thrilled her with pain.

She broke away.

"I detest you! I never want to see you again!"

She ran out of the room.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"That's that," said he.

By the time Abby reached the stair landing she had neither feeling nor energy. Holding to the banisters, she pulled herself the rest of the way.

Mother was waiting in Abby's room. "Well, Abby," she smiled, "have you anything to tell your mother?"

Then Abby heard the chugga-chugget! chugga-chugget! of

RED DAMASK

Dudley's automobile. For one wild moment she thought it was coming, not going. Feeling came back. Hope stung and, stinging, made twin scars of hopelessness and hurt pride. How could she want to see him now?

But there was Mother. "Couldn't you even be alone to suffer in this world?" Abby wondered. There was no use saying that to Mother. Mother couldn't understand. Abby felt as if she were suddenly flung apart in some queer painful vacuum, and as if all of her were dead except her brain.

"No, I have nothing to tell you," she said, flatly. "I am tired, Mother. Let's say good night." There was no use saying anything else to Mother.

Mother lingered. "You ought to tell your mother everything," she said, reproachfully.

Abby leaned against the door jamb, still in that vacuum looking out. She looked at her mother, a tall childish figure in a blue silk wrapper with a sandy auburn plait falling over each flat breast. Those round eyes had reproached her equally for "thinking of herself" and for any infringement of time or place; those smooth pink lips had prated recipes and standards equally. The recipes she tried.

"Abby!" Mother laughed nervously. "What are you looking at me like that for?"

Abby was looking like that because it suddenly struck her that her mother was a stranger.

"I'm going to send you up a cup of hot cocoa," said Mother.

"She thinks she can heal a broken heart with cocoa!" something shrilled to Abby.

After she had gone Abby walked up and down the room.

When Hilda brought the cocoa, Abby threw it down the wash-basin.

RED DAMASK

She walked up and down, up and down her room, listening to the ocean boom and sigh and crash. "He doesn't care for you. You love him. He doesn't care for you. You love him," it seemed to shriek to all the world.

Ah, but did she care about Dudley the way she ought to care, spiritually? How could she, when his character was not fine, when he had no ideals? Wasn't it that he, being base, appealed to her baser self? She had loved his kisses. It was wrong to love them, to feel as she had felt. Suddenly she felt afraid of the way she felt, afraid and ashamed.

Faster, faster, faster she stalked, as if to flee from memories. But they followed, pushing at her pulses, though she swung around the corners, almost running where the borders of the carpet were.

She went into the bathroom and scrubbed her teeth until the gums bled. She wanted to scrub his kisses off.

Depression came, too deep for tears, and shame. He knew that she cared. He didn't care. This lovely yellow dress she had worn. . . . "Female decked for the market place. . . ." Oh, Marina was right. Abby gritted her teeth. She felt her face flush, her body flush. There was panic in her shame. There was relief from greater hurt in hurt pride.

She tore off the yellow dress. It ripped. She caught hold of a bit of lace and pulled it. She liked the sound of it, tearing.

A chill night wind blew in the window on Abby's bare shoulder. She didn't feel it. But she shivered, and abruptly she felt sick. In the bathroom she turned on every faucet, lest Mother hear her being sick and come to her. The important thing was that Mother shouldn't come.

Exhausted, she crawled back and undressed and got into bed. Toward morning, she slept.

RED DAMASK

Two doors down the corridor, Marina wept weakly, unceasingly, not knowing why she wept. She didn't know that a modern girl bound for a career could weep because a worldly young man's past was exposed in a newspaper.

The next morning Dr. Hardenburg had to be sent for. He was still at Leitha Beach on account of Mrs. Kenheim, though he wanted to get home to Mrs. Ware, who was very ill. He gave Marina a tonic and a tirade against women entering professions. No wonder she was worn out from overwork. Women hadn't the strength for strains. 'They should be bearing and raising children. "You modern girls make me sick," he growled bluntly.

He didn't see Abby. She awakened, charged with nervous energy, her wound too deep to feel so soon. At first she had escaped it in rage, then in longing, in hurt pride, and in physical exhaustion. Now she drew on her energy, and Abby had great energy. It stilled everything but her brain.

She was going back to her art. She would become an architect. It was not too late. The resolve seemed to be made out of sheer logic, reached by no conscious steps. How silly she had been not to have done it long ago! Her reasons for renunciation seemed so futile. Her family! How futile to make sacrifices for people who talked one way and acted another.

Always when Abby made a decision she did something about it.

At breakfast she announced that she was going to New York.

"But I can't have Albert take you to the station," said Mother. "He is to work on the car this morning. What do you want to go to New York for?"

"None of your business," thought Abby in her vacuum. But habit was stronger than logic. "I'll get a taxicab," she said, cheerfully, because she felt so free of them, so free she needn't rage at them. And what was the use of raging now? She couldn't slap them, could she?

RED DAMASK

"Oh, we couldn't let you take a cab," said Grandfather. "And don't you think you should stay with your Cousin Marina today? She isn't feeling well. Isn't feeling well."

"I don't think I'd make her feel any better," said Abby, coolly. For if the family standards were not testworthy, neither were its duties, in the light of common sense.

Albert took her to the station, and in the arranging of his taking her, Mother forgot to learn where and why she was going.

On the way to New York Abby wanted to think, but her parlor car crackled with silk petticoats and buzzed with Mrs. Dernburg's plans for taking her family to the Adirondacks, with Mrs. Goodman's servant problems and Marian Kenheim's opinions of the fall styles; it buzzed over an undercurrent of communal excitement. For in addition to Dudley Kenheim's scandal, something had happened at the Hillside Country Club in Caraway County.

While Mr. Brockfield, its president, was spending the last week-end there, Leonard Tellander, his wife and Regina Ware and a young man named Elmer Rhone (who was not a member of the club, whom nobody knew, in fact), spent Sunday night outside his window, drinking Scotch highballs. When Mr. Brockfield asked them to be quiet, Regina sang an aria from "Aïda" in a falsetto voice, and the strange young man tried to imitate her. This kept up until three o'clock in the morning. Mr. Brockfield told everyone that he was going to ask the board of governors to suspend the Tellanders and Regina.

"I don't believe in young girls' drinking highballs," whispered Mrs. Goodman to Mrs. Block. "A little wine, maybe." She shrugged leniently. "But that Regina Ware always has been too gay!"

"Her poor mother."

RED DAMASK

"Well, it's time she realized that Regina should be looked after!"

"There never was such a mother. What she did for Gilbert . . ."

"Sh! That's her sister, Mrs. Riemann, sitting with Abby Hahl. Mrs. Ware is very sick, you know. Diabetes. And Regina went out to visit her aunt in Chicago—until this blows over, I guess. I wonder if they've telegraphed for her."

"What's the world coming to? This terrible thing about Dudley Kenheim," said Mrs. Goodman, who was deaf, to Mrs. Hays, who was deafer. "I can't tell you about it now. He's Marian Kenheim's cousin. And they say Abby Hahl was engaged to him. I wonder if it will be broken off. The Hahls are so particular."

"But he's so rich!" shouted Mrs. Hays.

Abby reddened hotly. Mrs. Riemann was telling her about Mrs. Ware's diet and her temperature, and the surmises of the nurses. Mrs. Riemann wallowed in gloom.

"I believe that if Sister passes on, Gilbert will follow her," she predicted, happily. She enjoyed looking forward to a calamity almost as much as its consummation.

"Gilbert has been very healthy since he's grown!" said Abby.

"I know," sighed Mrs. Riemann, "but there never was such a beautiful devotion as Gilbert's to his mother. He never would go out in the evenings until he knew she had an engagement. Ever since his father's death he has brought her a bouquet of violets every Sunday morning."

"Regina is in Chicago, I hear. Is Lewis here?"

"Yes, but Lewis is all for business, you know. Though I don't think the business has done so well since his father's death. I don't mean by that that the store isn't successful. But Henry Ware just put himself into it, like your father does. Now if

RED DAMASK

anything should happen to your father," began Mrs. Riemann, hopefully.

"Is Mrs. Ware at her home or at Gideon?" interrupted Abby.

In the station Abby hurried to a telephone booth. Her hands trembled while she searched through the telephone book for Matthew Heron's firm of architects. Her decision to see him was so new and so exciting that she didn't consider his possible indifference or his possible departure from New York.

He had departed from Riley, Lippincott & Caine.

"You might try Gladstone eight-one-eight-one," she was told.

Gladstone 8181, another architect's office, said that he wasn't with them any more.

"Can you tell me where he is?"

"How do I know where he is?"

"Do ask somebody. Please."

"Mr. Cassell, do you know where that guy Heron went?" The nasal drawl came fainter as it turned away from the phone.

"Say, miss, you'll find him at Smithson, Cary & Trench. In the Shirley Building."

She found him there.

"Why, hello, Abby! If you come over to the office now I can see you right away," he said, crisply, in a matter-of-fact tone. He didn't seem to realize that her telephoning him was epochal, that her going alone to a man's office was anarchy.

Unlike Uncle Stanley's study, Matthew Heron's office was not artistic. It was a boxlike room with one window overlooking a huge sign that advertised chewing gum. There were no pictures on the white plaster walls. Against one of them two wooden clothes horses supported smoothed boards on which was some drawing paper, a plane, and a ruler. Matthew Heron had to

RED DAMASK

bring a chair from another office for Abby, and after he closed the door he took a swivel chair in front of an ugly Mission desk stuffed with blue prints. Abby started nervously when he closed the door.

He had not changed much in six years. His bronze hair still bristled like elongated storm-tossed sand. But he wore steel-rimmed spectacles that made him look older than thirty-two. Behind them his blue eyes smiled very cordially at Abby.

"Well, how are the Ten Commandments?" he asked.

"I'm thinking of breaking the one about honoring your parents," chattered Abby, without thinking of what she was saying. She felt as if a motor were driving her to action without thought. She couldn't keep still. She played ceaselessly with the handle of her pocketbook.

"Number five. Your Biblical education has been shockingly neglected. You ought to learn the others. You might find some more to break," he teased.

"I had quite a time finding you," said Abby, tactlessly.

He laughed. "You tried Riley, Lippincott & Caine? I left them right after I told Senator Austin what I thought of his art collection. We were to do an interesting little Greek gallery for it, but he had a number of sea pictures. You know: 'The Return of the Sailboat'—wives and children waiting on the shore. Big dogs finding children in the Alps. Battles, with a polished hero winning the fray. The old boy asked me if I didn't think they were great. Like an idiot, I told him they would be great on a moving-picture screen, but they'd be the very devil in a Greek gallery."

"Oh, I don't think that was idiotic!" said Abby, eagerly, leaning toward him, tense on the edge of her chair.

She looked charming in her soft silk waist with tendrils of brown hair curling over the back of her smooth high collar.

RED DAMASK

Small creamy chiffon ruffles ran gayly down between the revers of her short brown jacket. Brown and yellow wings lay folded on either side of her straw hat. Her eyes were shining topaz with excitement. Running away from her shock, she wouldn't think of it. She wouldn't think about lost illusions of family nobility, either. Taut with energy, she denied the past and ignored the future.

And Matthew Heron liked an eager listener.

"Well, I resigned, to put it mildly, from the next place you phoned," he went on, smiling, "after cursing out the chief when he told me to design a Queen Anne country house for a wealthy brewer in Jersey. The wife wanted a Japanesque porch on one side, rough stone and nice polished wood, you know. And then she wanted an art-nouveau summer-house next to it. On a terrace. That was that." He shrugged.

"Oh, I think it's wonderful for you to stick to your ideals!" breathed Abby.

"My dear child, ideals have nothing to do with it. It's like sneezing. Aesthetic sneezes. It's worse than any hay fever. I explode when I visualize something horrible. It's an infliction. I'm always sorry afterward, but so is the other fellow. Now tell me, what do you want to see me about? Where to get bombs for families?"

Abby drew a long breath.

"I have decided to be an architect."

"No!"

"Oh, don't tease, Mr. Heron. I'm awfully in earnest."

"Bless your heart, child, I wouldn't think of teasing. Let's see what you've been doing."

It was nice of him not to ask more questions. She was so tired of questions.

"I haven't anything to show you. I do a few sketches every

RED DAMASK

now and then when we're in Europe. But I was so certain of giving it up that I couldn't bear to dab at it. . . ."

He looked grave. "That's bad. If you had a real architectonic sense, I don't think you could have kept from . . . Still . . . one can never be sure. Abby, are you really in earnest?"

"Oh yes! I know I am now. I thought of going back to it in 1907, but when I tried it was messy, and I thought about how wonderful Rembrandt and Dürer were and what was the use. . . . Now I know that I just wasn't ready to strike out. . . ."

"Abby getting analytical! This is wonderful. Um. Listen. One of our tracers has just left to get married. It's drudgery, you know, going over other people's work. But it would prove how serious you are. I think I could get you the job. I heard the office manager say he was going to look for somebody this afternoon. If you want it, you've got to take it now. And I'll coach you at night. I've got some theories I've always wanted to try in art education. So old they're brand new. Well, Abby, what do you say?"

"You mean I can say yes or no now?"

"Right now." His eyes were quizzical. "You see, you've got a bad reputation to live down with me, Abby. You've got to show me that you mean business."

"Oh, I do mean business! And I'd love to settle it right now. Can I see the manager right away?" With a little spring, Abby jumped up from her chair.

Matthew Heron started for the door. "I'll get him."

Abby walked to the window. "That would mean coming to town every day," she was thinking aloud. "The parents . . ."

Matthew Heron, his hand on the door knob, turned around and looked at her.

"No. I'd have to stay in town, wouldn't I," she said, "to work in the evenings? Oh, the parents would never let me do

RED DAMASK

that!" For while Abby had lost the illusion of family nobility, while she could deny petty duties, big ones ruled her, though she tried to deny differences in degree. Habit bridged the break in a chain that pulled, break or no break. She was not afraid of the family. She was afraid of violating what they had taught her to be her duty to them.

"I thought so!" said Matthew Heron. He sat down again.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Twenty-two," she said, her nervous gayety gone.

"You're of age. I should think you'd be through with the fifth Commandment. You have to grow up, you know."

"Oh, Mr. Heron, I don't always agree with my parents. They're not always right and they don't even . . ." (No, she couldn't tell an outsider how they compromised!) "I'm perfectly ready to insist on taking up the work I want to do. But leaving home, openly disobeying them . . . I can't analyze it . . . but I just can't do it."

"Abby, I wonder if there isn't something back of this that you aren't facing. If you'll be honest with yourself, won't you find that a lot of this is economic? As long as your father is supporting you he can dictate to you. You'd get a salary of fifteen dollars a week, if you can qualify. Why don't you strike out for yourself and live on it?"

"You mean no matter what they say? That would hurt them terribly. And, oh, Mr. Heron, I'd never forgive myself for that. It isn't economic. I could live on fifteen dollars a week if I had to. I'd love it. It would be fun." (Oh, what fun! The thrill and adventure of being independent!)

Abby had a flash, a picture of a crisp, busy Abby doing the work she loved, but then she had another flash, her old phantasy of a carnival float filled with little Abbys, driven by the one big Abby, who was character, who had to drive with care!

RED DAMASK

"No, Mr. Heron, it isn't that I think the family is right," she said, sadly, "but I can't do what I know is wrong toward them. My conscience just won't let me. Not a definite break. Couldn't I manage it some other way?"

She looked at him so earnestly, her pretty mustard-colored eyes glistening with fervor and excitement, her pretty pink lips parted with eagerness, her pretty heart-shaped face flushed. She was very appealing. (She had been appealing to Matthew Heron always, though he didn't know it.)

He got up from his swivel chair and patted her shoulder tenderly.

"You poor little girl! You want to have your cake, and eat it, too," he said.

But his eyes betrayed what his brain would have denied. There was feeling in them, feeling that sprayed acid on the wound that Abby was running from. It gaped. She stared at him, horrified.

Unaware, he leaned down to reach a blue print that had fallen.

But Abby, oversensitized, was very much aware. She looked around wildly. The door was closed but it wasn't locked. She didn't wait to learn what he was reaching for.

She dashed for the door. She ran from the room. She didn't wait for the elevator. She ran down seven flights of stairs.

When Abby reached the street the sight of a big clock in a jeweler's window was like shelter in a blizzard. It shielded her from chaos, reminding her mother's daughter that her train wouldn't leave for an hour and a half. Albert was meeting that train; Abby had to take it.

She didn't want any lunch and she couldn't go to the station and wait and think. She didn't want to think. She had to do something.

RED DAMASK

She could send some flowers to Mrs. Ware, who was ill.

There was an excellent florist across the street, and, though Abby selected each blossom carefully, she still had an hour and twenty minutes. Then she realized that they would give Mrs. Ware more pleasure if she took them herself and called to inquire. She charged the flowers, put the box under her arm, and hurried (she ran, as if something pursued her) to the Wares' house in East Fiftieth Street.

She didn't notice that the shades were pulled down.

The maid opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Ware worse?" asked Abby, quickly.

"Oh, Miss Hahl," the maid sobbed, "she's . . ."

Mrs. Riemann opened the doors from the parlor.

"Who is it, Effie?" And then she opened her arms. "Oh, Abby!"

She clung to Abby, pulling her back to the parlor.

"Oh, Abby . . . when I got here . . . she was gone! . . . It must have been while I was talking to you. Oh, if I had only been here! To think I wasn't here!" That was a thought Mrs. Riemann couldn't bear, though other disasters pleased her.

She pulled Abby down on the sofa beside her and cried on Abby's shirtwaist ruffles. Abby patted her head.

"Oh, Mrs. Riemann, is there anything I can do?" said Abby.

"Abby, won't you come upstairs and see Gilbert? He's so . . ."

Abby shrank from seeing Gilbert.

"Abby, do. I think he ought to see someone," said Mrs. Riemann.

Abby went.

Gilbert sat in a straight chair in his mother's boudoir, staring out of the window. There was no expression on his white face. Every now and then his eyes filled with tears. He wiped them

RED DAMASK

off with a handkerchief. His mouth made queer paroxysms, and then settled into ghastly calm.

A little smile fluttered across it when he saw Abby.

"Hello, Abby! Here I am," he said, pitifully.

The maid called Mrs. Riemann.

Abby was left alone with him.

"Gilbert, I'm so sorry. I wish . . . I wish there were something . . ."

"There isn't anything any more," he said.

The room was quiet, vivid with Mrs. Ware. Her pen was on the desk, her stationery, monogrammed; her embroidery was on the table, a red silk rose, unfinished; and yet she was dead.

The city's summer sounds: the clang of trolley cars on Madison Avenue, the screech of riveters, all the blare of traffic, queerly seemed to recede from that studied quiet where death was. Skirts rustled softly; footfalls padded; whispers hushed. The outside world, the complicated world, queerly seemed to recede, too. Here, where death was, life simplified.

"You'll want to see her," said Gilbert, wistfully.

Abby didn't want to see her.

But Gilbert's eyes filled with tears and he wiped them away so patiently.

"Yes, Gilbert," said Abby, gently.

She went into the next room with him.

Lewis sat by the bed. He pressed Abby's hand.

Under a taffeta coverlid, a sumptuous green coverlid, a marvel of puffs and frills of lace and chiffon flowers, was a long bulge, the outlines of a body. It was evidently and so soon a body. Abby shut her teeth hard on her lips to keep from shuddering. She didn't want to see the face.

Gilbert drew the coverlid back. The taffeta hissed. The face

RED DAMASK

was very thin and grayish brown, its straight features sunk and small, more skull than face.

Abby could have screamed when Gilbert kissed it.

He wouldn't stop kissing it.

There were heavy, measured treads on the stairs, a tiptoeing into the room, and the shush-shugh of starched linen. A trained nurse looked significantly at Lewis and motioned to Gilbert.

But Lewis could do nothing with him.

"Come on, old boy," he begged.

"You shan't take me away from her," said Gilbert, fiercely. "I won't let them . . ."

Then Abby said, "Come, Gilbert." She touched him gently on the arm. "Please. Won't you? For me."

He looked up at her, bewilderment in his gray eyes, appealing, like a hurt child.

He nodded. "All right."

She led him away, past the men who waited in the hall, men in black clothes, whose faces grieved professionally, automatically.

Back in Mrs. Ware's boudoir, Gilbert flung himself on the chaise longue. Abby sat by him, and he held her hand tightly, and began to sob, hard, dry, catching sobs.

The nurse came to the door, looked at him, looked at Abby, closed the door, and went out.

Every time Abby tried to take her hand away Gilbert's hold tightened. The tips of her fingers tingled and finally got numb. But she couldn't leave him, when he needed her.

Finally he sat up.

"You know, Abby, it was because of Regina. Mother had so much pride. And when Mr. Brockfield wrote that letter about the club . . . you know the straight way she used to walk . . . it seemed to break her will. People talking like that about her

RED DAMASK

daughter. She didn't care any more. We would have had her several years if it hadn't been for Regina." There was only grief, no blame in his voice.

There was blame in Abby's. "Oh, how could she! When her mother was sick!"

"Regina didn't mean any harm. She's just thoughtless. She should have had a sister. Mother is so wonderful. But she gives . . . gave so much to me . . . somehow . . . mother and daughter." Gilbert shook his head. "And Mother was so anxious that her sickness should make no difference in our lives. She wants . . . she wanted everything kept just as if she were well." His voice broke as he changed to the past tense. His eyes filled with tears.

Abby tried to comfort him. "Gilbert, your mother would have become more and more of an invalid if she had lived. And she would have hated that."

"No. Not for a long time. She was so careful about the diet. I remember when we came down from Maine and the train was late and she wouldn't eat anything at a hotel. The servants had gone to bed, and she came down to the kitchen and boiled some eggs for herself. That was in the beginning, before we had the nurse, Miss Kramer, here. I tried to help, and broke an egg on the stove." He smiled faintly. "And she would clean it herself. She wouldn't have the cook come down and find a mess. 'Oh, you boys never grow up,' she used to say."

He went on talking about her, telling little things: what she used to say; what she used to do.

The clock struck two.

Abby had missed her train.

It did not matter. Nothing mattered. In this house of grief, pure air swept through Abby, purging her resentments and her fears.

RED DAMASK

"I must go home now, Gilbert," she said, gently.

He had been talking quietly, but his mouth began to twist again. He clung to her. "Abby, you won't leave me now. I can't let you go. I need you, Abby. Don't go!" He was almost hysterical.

There was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Riemann opened it and beckoned to Abby.

"Abby, you have so much influence over Gilbert. I want to run out and see about some things. Black things, you know. I never can wear anything ready-made. And I know Mrs. Traill will fix up a model. She is so obliging. I won't be but a minute. She's so near." Mrs. Riemann sniffed. "And she'll see me in her private sitting room. I telephoned. Miss Kramer is in the next room if you should want her. Can't you stay, Abby?"

Abby stayed.

People called. It was amazing how many people were in town to come and how quickly the news traveled. Abby saw them. (She didn't see how puzzled they were to see her!) Some of the Ware family were abroad; they had to be cabled. Abby cabled them. Regina was on the way from Chicago. Somebody had to discuss things with the undertaker. He came before Mrs. Riemann returned from the dressmaker. Abby talked to him. She was surprised that she could talk to him. Somebody had to talk to the florist. Abby talked to him.

It was she who discussed necessary plans for the funeral with Lewis, though she scarcely knew him.

She was tireless. The ability to do what had to be done was inexhaustible. And doing it gave her a sure content, a busy certainty she hadn't known for months.

Gilbert leaned on her. He needed her. It was a comfort to

RED DAMASK

be needed. He clung to her, and she was glad to have him clinging. Arousing neither storm nor tumult, it gave her peace.

She telephoned to Mother at Leitha Beach.

"Well, Abby, I've been worried to death about you. I didn't know where you were. Albert waited at the station for two trains. It took all his afternoon. Where are you, anyway?" asked Mother.

Abby told her three times where she was, and why.

"But, Abby, I don't understand. How so should you be there at such a time, Abby? I should think the family. . . . I don't see why you should be there. . . ." she argued.

Abby heard Grandfather's voice close to the phone. One failure couldn't make a pessimist of Grandfather.

"All right, Abby," said Mother. "I'm glad for you to stay. I do hope you can be a comfort to them. Is there anything we can do? Do give my love to poor Gilbert. I know how stricken he must be. Good-by, Abby dear. What train did you say? The late train? But Albert . . ." Her voice faltered. Then it went on, for Grandfather had stayed in the telephone closet with Mother. "All right," she said, heroically. "I'll have Albert meet you."

The next morning Abby awakened early. She felt as if a motor, a hum, hum, humming motor, were driving her. She had to do something; she must not stop and think.

She sprang out of bed, though it was only a few minutes after five. Family breakfast, on account of Father's train, was at seven-thirty.

How good that cold shower felt! She stood under it, head in tan cap jerked high, breath shortened, body tingling with delicious shock. She scrambled into her clothes, so quickly that she

RED DAMASK

pulled a button off the cuff of her linen dress, trying to push her hand through without unfastening it. And instead of being annoyed, she started to hum, a busy absent humming:

"Ich singe, wie der Vogel singt
Der in den Zweigen wohnt,"

as she took a gold thimble out of her little ivory workbox and threaded a needle, hard to thread because her hand trembled queerly. Careful stitches. There! Twist the thread round and round between the button and the linen, the way Fräulein taught her. Dear old Fräulein, she was with some nieces of Aunt Aurelia's now . . . Funny curls she had had. . . . What a pretty day! Might get warm later. . . . Date for lunch at Rose Hahl's. . . . She must get a ride in. . . . It felt good to gallop. . . . That new horse Keen had told her about. . . . Now what. . . .

She went to the window, fingers pressed to her temples, trying not to think. She could straighten her bureau drawers before Mother told Paula to.

Dudley had liked that fan. . . . Queer. . . . As if an inner voice said, "Why, Abby, you don't know you're hurt!" . . . How can you be hurt when you don't feel hurt? . . . "You'll feel it, some day, maybe when you have time." . . . No time now. . . .

She had never finished that beaded fob for Grandfather. . . . Those coppery beads didn't go well with the green ones. . . . Would Regina's train from Chicago be late?

She wished she could meet Regina. Mrs. Riemann was not comforting.

What should she wear to the funeral tomorrow? . . . Her brown suit, of course. Paula would have to put fresh ruffles on the waist. Mrs. Riemann had ruined them.

There! No drawer could be neater. . . . Twenty minutes be-

RED DAMASK

fore breakfast, though . . . She could write Aunt Olive what train she would take to the Adirondacks! How different it would be this year without Donna . . . And now Donna would be a mother soon . . . How wonderful! Her stamp book was empty. Good! After breakfast, to the village for some stamps. . . . And then what? . . .

Now it was breakfast time.

Mother wanted to know the plans for Mrs. Ware's funeral. Grandfather wondered if the Jewish Maternity Hospital, his pet charity, would be remembered in the will. Even Father, who rarely joined the breakfast catechisms, asked if they were closing Ware's store for the rest of the week or only for the day of the funeral. Marina said she thought it was queer that Regina should be away when her mother was sick. And Abby, who had disliked Regina, defended her.

Then Mother wanted to know what time Abby went to the Wares', how she happened to go there, what she had done before she went, and why she went to New York, anyway?

"Oh, I think I got there a little after twelve. But what's the difference? What's the use of talking about what's already done?" said Abby, surprisingly.

Mother looked hurt. "What should we talk about— philosophy? Why shouldn't you tell what you've been doing?"

"Maybe it's something Abby doesn't want to tell," said Marina, sweetly.

"Maybe," said Abby.

"Now, girls, now! Who wants to come down to the village with me? I want to send a cable to Karl and inquire about Donna. About Donna," said Grandfather.

"I do," said Abby. "I want to get some stamps."

"And then we'll go to see Aunt Sophie."

"Oh yes. I have a book for William."

RED DAMASK

"I must work," said Marina, virtuously. "I don't think I'd better go to Rose's for lunch. I have to make up the time I lost while I was sick."

"Now it wouldn't do any harm to take a little time for recreation. Doctor Hardenburg says you work too hard. You . . ."

"I don't care. I've got to prepare my lectures." Marina was almost crying.

"There! There! Marina, you don't have to go," soothed Grandfather.

What was the matter with the girls?

Mother said that Rose Hahl Kenheim's house was more "like the Adirondacks than like Leitha Beach."

It was a rambling gray-shingled cottage with a green roof, beyond the macadamized road, away from the board walk. A rock garden wandered down crooked steps and winding paths toward the sea, and turned unexpectedly around a clump of hydrangeas and led back to a stout green door with rose vines climbing over it. Inside, the wooden walls were stained green, and pretty chintz curtains and nice old hunting prints bedecked them.

Every time Abby came there she said, "I love this house."

And every time Rose, with her happy, tinkling laugh, said, "So do we."

Her personal pronoun was plural always. She and her Henry thought alike (and seldom); they felt alike (and often); they looked alike. Both were blond; both had pleasant even features, forever good-humored. Both had exquisite taste in clothes and decoration and ample means to gratify it. Neither tried to be intellectual.

Quizzing them about Bergson or Maeterlinck was one of Marina's few real pleasures. She could say, "Rose has never

RED DAMASK

heard of Bergson! What do you think of that?" Or, "Henry thought Maeterlinck wrote *The Piper*. Isn't that awful!"

Today Rose met Abby at the door.

"Why, where's Marina?"

"Didn't Paula telephone? Marina got a notice from Beele that she had to be there a few days earlier than she expected, and that means hurrying her lectures. She was sick yesterday and she has to make up the time."

"It must be awful to prepare lectures," shuddered Rose.

"Marina's parents are very ambitious," sighed Abby, wishing she had had ambitious parents. "Oh, come here to Aunt Abby!" she called as a chubby golden-haired boy toddled into the living room, dragging a huge teddy bear.

He stood before Abby, striking an attitude.

"Doe tell Andt Abbee,
Doe tell Andt Abbee,
Doe tell Andt Abbee,
De old dray goose is dead. . . .
De one . . .
De one . . ."

The blue eyes opened wide. They looked out of the window. They looked at his mother. They blinked.

"De one . . .
De one . . ."

The rosy lips quivered.

"Oh, I fordot," he wailed.

Abby grabbed him. "There, there, darling! I think it's a beautiful poem. I used to say it when I was a little girl. And I used to forget the last part, too!"

"Oh, did you?" He looked up and grinned, and wiped his

RED DAMASK

tears on the teddy bear. "It's a surprise. Wanta see 'ittle sister? She can't say anyfing but 'Guh, Guh,' " he said, pityingly.

It was a pink-and-white baby in a pink bassinet, a picture baby, in a room papered with rosebuds. A dimpled nurse in blue was heating some water.

"Oh, could I hold her a minute?" begged Abby.

"I don't allow that, usually. But this is such a good baby. She breaks all my rules," smiled the nurse.

The baby smelled like the sun and violets and honey. She crowed when Abby burrowed into her neck, and grabbed a strand of Abby's hair and pulled, a delicious pull. It seemed to snatch at Abby's heartstrings and twist them. She looked up with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, she's adorable!" she said.

"Wait till you have one of your own," said Rose.

A pleasant-faced butler served a simple lunch, exquisitely cooked. Rose chattered placidly about clothes, and Mrs. Ware's death, and how Mr. Brockfield regretted the fuss at the Hillside Club, and how she preferred doilies to a tablecloth for luncheon, and how fortunate Dudley Kenheim was to get a cabin on the *Lusitania*.

When Rose mentioned Dudley, Abby dropped her fork and wondered why her hand fumbled. Her heart felt comfortably numb. She could ask whether Dudley's father was going with him, for she was thinking, "If I leave here at three o'clock, will I have time to call on Mrs. Ringler and wish her joy to her son's birthday, and then go down to Long Branch for some tennis balls, and get my ride in before Father's train?"

And Rose had no curiosity about Abby and Dudley. If Abby had news, she would tell it. Rose was too happy and too simple to be curious.

RED DAMASK

She was in ardent awe of the Kenheim family, into whose rituals (as into her own) she fitted cozily. She didn't struggle against family life; it opposed no wishes or needs of hers. She enjoyed it; it suited her. And her tone when speaking of the Kenheim family was reverent, as if it were royalty and she a favored lady at court. She was surprised when Abby asked whether Rose's mother-in-law were still at Carlsbad. Surely the populace should know the whereabouts of Mrs. Henry Kenheim, Senior!

Abby was amused.

Rose was called to the telephone.

Abby heard her voice from the hall. "Yes, Henry dear. Doctor Bach is sure. Isn't it wonderful?"

"It," she confided to Abby later, was to be a new baby.

"I'm so glad," she laughed, happily. "We want to have five children right away and then we'll have our family and we can travel and have marvelous times."

"You look so well!" said Abby.

"I always do. Having babies never bothers me. Mother says I ought to pretend to be a little uncomfortable; that it isn't nice to have them so easily. But I think it's nice!"

A queer little feeling of fullness came into Abby's throat. A queer little thrill fluttered over her heart.

She couldn't bear to look at the brooding happiness in Rose's pretty blue eyes, at the smile of content on the full pink lips.

"Oh, I'm so glad for you!" She squeezed Rose's hand, scratching her finger on Rose's huge solitaire. "It's all right. Don't bother," laughed Abby, twisting her handkerchief around the tiny cut. "It doesn't matter."

What mattered was her sudden certainty that Rose's life was the right life. Women like Marina were miserable makeshifts. What was a profession compared to your own home, where ques-

RED DAMASK

tions weren't asked and you could do as you pleased? What was a career compared with the joy of having children? The thought of a profession sickened Abby, for when she thought of architecture she saw that look in Matthew Heron's eyes, that look she was through with forever. She couldn't think of it any more. She wouldn't think of Dudley. She wouldn't think at all.

"Rose, do ring and have somebody see if Albert's come," she said, jumping up from her chair. "I want to stop by Mrs. Ringler's, and go down to Long Branch for some tennis balls, and get my ride in before Father's train. And I wonder if I can find a copy of *Æs Triplex* at Long Branch. I think it would be nice to send it to Gilbert. He is so fond of Stevenson."

"Poor Gilbert! I suppose he's all broken up," said Rose, gravely.

"He is being very brave!" flashed Abby.

Why was she proud of Gilbert's bravery?

For the next three days Abby lived but for activity. She did anything, no matter what. She never stopped running away from herself, from her shock on shock on shock. She never knew she was exhausted. Only her wrists felt strained sometimes, her ankles ached.

On the third day, two days after his mother's funeral, Mrs. Riemann asked Abby for dinner with Gilbert. He was staying with her at Leitha Beach.

After dinner Mrs. Riemann significantly left them alone in her red damask sun parlor, and Gilbert reminisced about his mother. They talked quiet impersonalities, but when Abby said, "I must go now," tears glistened in his eyes.

"Oh, Abby, don't go! I'm so lonely when you go. Can't you see how I need you?" He came over to the sofa and sat beside her, and buried his face in his hands. She tried to comfort him,

RED DAMASK

and she wondered why she felt no pity in her heart when she was half sick with pity in her mind.

Suddenly he sat up straight and turned and looked at her, and gently, very gently, took her hand.

She thought how fine his face was, how clear and beautiful his eyes. She knew he'd always be fine. And he needed her.

"Could you . . . Abby?"

She nodded gravely. He kissed her, and she didn't mind. It was such a gentle kiss.

Chapter Eight

ABBY'S delighted family deplored a quiet wedding in September.

But Abby wanted to marry Gilbert, and something told her (something that consciously she wouldn't listen to) that if she didn't marry him quickly she wouldn't marry him at all.

Then Grandfather, happy that Abby, his favorite, was going to be married to a fine young man, said, "After all, a wedding is nicer with just the family and no outsiders. And Karl and Donna will send a cable to read."

"To think that some one else should choose my daughter's marriage linens," wailed Mother when she cabled Aunt Aurelia to order them in Frankfort. Traditionally, Hahl-Wendel marriage linens came from Frankfort, and the George Hahls were there selecting winter wines.

"You wouldn't have time, anyway," said Father, "with all your running around. Why don't you and Abby stay in town instead of going in the train every day?"

They went in Father's train, and Mother read her paper so sociably that Father couldn't read his.

"Why, Philip, you're right!" she exclaimed. "I could send Paula in, and the kitchenmaid could cook for us. Mrs. Lieber could get scrubbing women and open up the house. No, I had better not ask Gretchen to do without a kitchenmaid." (Mother did her serious thinking aloud.) She went on: "I'll get Mrs. Bonheim to send us a temporary cook. She is always so obliging

RED DAMASK

when I ask her. Or we could stay at the Maitland. Mr. Trent would make us so comfortable. He would do anything for the family. Abby, don't you think we had better stay at the Maitland?"

"No, Mother, I don't want Gilbert to be in town in the heat, and I don't think we ought to leave Grandfather, anyway."

That settled it.

But Abby didn't know that those daily trips were part of her craving for activity, or that inner exhaustion pushed her from specialty shop to specialty shop. Nothing at Philip Hahl's or Ware's was good enough.

"No girl ever had a finer trousseau! And in such a rush! Abby has worked like a major!" bragged Mother to relatives and friends who called to admire dainty piles of lace and muslin and crêpe de Chine clasped with strips of puffed ribbon and lace, labeled, "Corset covers. A. H. W." or "Petticoats. A. H. W." in buff embroidery on linen squares.

Grandfather rejoiced that Abby, having no sister, could have Cousin Marina with her now. And Abby, who was getting married, felt sorry for Marina, who wasn't, and was patient with her "What do you want all those tea gowns for?" and "Abby, isn't it funny to be on with the new love so soon after the old?" Consciously, Marina overtired herself entering engagement and wedding presents in the record book, and then was offended when Abby suggested Rose Hahl Kenheim's doing it. In fact, enduring Marina was another vent for Abby's energy.

She wrote every "Thank you" note herself.

She agreed with Gilbert not to return duplicate wedding presents for credit. "We mustn't spread the return evil!" he said.

Their honeymoon plans seemed strenuous to Gilbert, but if Abby wanted to go from Cairo to Constantinople, he wanted to

RED DAMASK

take her. Before sailing they would have a quiet week at Snug Haven on the Massachusetts coast.

Gilbert was happy.

He talked to Abby about Regina and his brother Lewis. He wanted her to get Regina interested in "something worth while." He hoped Regina would not marry Elmer Rhone, who had gone to Chicago and back to New York with her (to her mother's funeral). Elmer Rhone was of German-Jewish descent, but he was newly rich, a social climber, an outsider. "There's something about him I don't like," said Gilbert.

And Abby agreed. It was wonderful how they agreed.

They would find a "nice girl" for Lewis, who never had cared for them. After the wedding Gilbert could tell Abby what Lewis had cared for.

Short placid evenings passed. Gilbert left early because Abby was tired. Gilbert was very tender. Always he said such heavenly things when she was tired. He didn't know that he loved her best when she was tired.

Abby stood in front of the long mirror set in her bathroom door, watching Mrs. Traill expertly arrange her wedding veil over a long train of white satin and rose-point lace and pearls.

Grandfather came in, kissed her, wiped his eyes, blew his nose, and went out.

Father came in. "Abby, what in the name of Heaven did you tell two photographers that they could come out here for?"

"First I promised Sloan's, and then the girl who telephoned from Rogers' yesterday said she might lose her job. . . ."

"Stuff! Nonsense! Selling talk!"

"Well, I promised both of them," said Abby.

Mother, in a comfortable chair, cried steady, happy tears.

RED DAMASK

Something said: "Abby, this is your wedding dress. You're getting married!"

But Abby couldn't realize it even when Uncle Elias said, "Do you, Abby Hahl, take Gilbert Ware to be your lawfully wedded husband, for better or for worse, in health, sickness, and adversity, until death shall part you?"

She responded clearly, her mind fixed on whether Gilbert would drop the ring. But Lewis, his best man, safely handed it across the little altar banked with smilax, which the florist had built in the red damask parlor at Leitha Beach. It was decorated with roses from the Hahls' own garden.

Then there was a real Hahl-Wendel wedding feast, with jellied soup and lobster Newburg, and squab chicken and beef filet, and wines and champagne and speeches; a paper printed with take-offs on the family; verses; and ice cream molded under an altar of spun sugar on which a doll bride and groom clasped china hands.

Uncle Elias Wendel, the judge, spoke first, a little solemnly. Secretly he disliked weddings. (His wife was so fat and he had such a fine character.) He said that Grandfather's guidance, his nobility, his example, had made such happy occasions possible for the family. He hoped the young people would remember Grandfather's singleness of purpose, his thoughtfulness of others, his high ideals, in their pilgrimage through life together.

Grandfather was touched.

"May God bless you and bring you happiness, Abby and Gilbert. Such happiness as seems certain to our gaze as we watch your beaming faces. Gilbert knows how our hearts went out to him and his in his recent sorrow and that his noble mother would rejoice here with us if God in His wisdom had spared her. Now our dear Abby must never forget that she should not only

RED DAMASK

inspire Gilbert as our good wives always inspire us," (he bowed to his Sophie), "but she should keep him always faithful to his better self, always linked to the highest and best. Now let us drink to long lives and much happiness for Abby and Gilbert. *Hoch!*"

"Drink a little champagne. It's good for you," Lewis whispered to Gilbert, who looked pale.

Abby listened to everything.

Victoria Wendel Dodd, the family poetess, had composed an ode for the occasion. She read it with expression:

"When Abby was a tiny tot,
E'en then did Gilbert after her trot,
He ran to her in Central Park;
His nurse did then the case remark.

"At Leitha Beach on the tennis court,
As children they did much consort;
In Europe at the various places,
Of their play we could find traces.

"When Abby grew to girlhood fair,
Gilbert at parties always was there,
And Cupid flung his little dart,
And hit dear Gilbert right in the heart.

"Abby led him quite a dance,
Cruel maids thus often take a chance,
But Love shot his arrow to punish her,
And now in his plans she does concur.

"So do we see them in noble bliss;
Let us watch and they will kiss.
Oh, Abby fair and Gilbert strong,
Here's to your happiness! It will last long."

RED DAMASK

"Wonderful!"

"Brava!"

"Vicky, I want a copy!" begged Rose Hahl Kenheim.

"Me, too, Victoria," called Max Hardenburg.

Victoria promised copies for everybody.

Grandfather quoted from Schiller's "Glöcke."

Uncle Cyrus Hardenburg made a speech extolling Mother, her guidance and her fine character. He hoped that Abby and Gilbert would share their beautiful happiness with others. Their lives should each day grow more and more useful, more of an inspiration to the community, as Mother's was.

When Abby threw the wedding bouquet from the stairs, with one short exultant thrill she thought, "How many brides I've watched, and now I am one!" Marina caught the bouquet, blushed, looked pleased. And Abby noticed William Wendel standing next to Regina. While she put on her traveling dress, instead of realizing that she was married, she worried over what Regina might say to him, and would he be upset.

Regina worried, too, when she saw him, for the first time since that dreadful day in Switzerland. He was clean shaven now, his lean face browned and tranquil, his wiry frame at ease in the dress suit he wore comfortably instead of consciously, as Elmer Rhone wore his. Irrationally, Regina compared them, and instead of being relieved, her vanity was hurt when William said how lovely Abby looked and how beautiful the flowers were, as if to any old acquaintance.

Suddenly his mouth twitched. "Oh, Regina, I wish you could have been at my concert in Munich! Of course you heard about it, but you've never seen my notices. I never go out, except on special occasions like this. My nerves, you know. But if you'll come and see me some day I'll show you my clippings. In Germany they know when something unusual happens."

RED DAMASK

Regina shrank away. Confused, she said, "I hope you'll give a concert here."

His face darkened. He bent close to her. "No, Regina, not while my nerves are what they are. Nobody knows what it means. Nobody knows the price the artist pays. You couldn't understand. But when you have nerves like mine!"

And Regina could see that he was prouder of his nerves than of his concert; too interested in them to be aware of her.

She didn't know that it was the first time he had bragged about them. It was not the last time.

Abby and Gilbert stayed in New York that night, at the Maitland Hotel, and the manager, who had served the family for years, filled their sitting room with roses. They were helpful.

Coming in from Leitha Beach, the bride and groom had chattered earnestly about the simplicity of Uncle Elias's marriage service, how pretty Regina looked, and wasn't Victoria Wendel's poem awful? Would it rain or wouldn't it, and weren't parlor cars hard to ventilate?

But the lobby at the Maitland seemed too quiet and queer. That brass grill where the clerks were swung out, etching into Abby's consciousness. She was afraid of running into one of those great fluted marble columns, and light from the glittering chandelier made her blink.

Their own suite was quieter, queerer still.

Two page boys left them. The door closed. Gilbert locked it.

Abby's breath caught sharply in her throat. Suddenly she wanted to grab the door open and run, scuttling down the corridor. She remembered what Mother, blushing, had said: "Now be sensible. Whatever your husband asks of you is right." Her heart thumped so hard she couldn't think. She listened to it, and then to a small voice saying: "Well, you're here. It's got to go on.

RED DAMASK

You can't funk it." She remembered the way Fräulein told the story of the Spartan boy—"The boy chust smiled." Bravely she lifted her head in its pretty brown toque. She tried to push her lips upward, but they were dry and stiff.

"What lovely roses!" She burrowed her nose in a tall green vase full of them, lost for one precious second in their fragrance.

"Yes, they are lovely," said Gilbert. "Don't you love roses?"

"I've always liked violets better."

"And I haven't any violets for you! I am a neglectful husband."

"I won't give you a bad mark this time."

Gilbert stood by the mantelpiece, Abby near the window. The city's traffic joined in a distant rhythm of noisy quiet. A fire engine shrilled around the corner. Both jumped.

"Don't you want to . . ." Gilbert gulped. "Don't you want to take off your hat and stay awhile?" he said, shyly, and then, panicky, wondered if he had said the wrong thing.

For Abby reddened horribly. She took a hatpin out of her hat and put it on a marble table. She laid another exactly across the first.

"Abby!" Gilbert crossed the rug and took her in his arms. She trembled, rigid.

Gilbert wished he dared tell her that there would be nothing to be afraid of now, nothing until she was more used to him.

How sweet and innocent she was for all her twenty-two years, he thought, adoring her sweetness, worshiping her innocence. Standing there in her soft brown suit, with its short jacket falling straightly, to meet her skirt's long line, she looked like a child peeping out of a tube, her mustard-colored eyes so big, her heart-shaped face so white. If only he could save her every anxiety, every pain. . . .

RED DAMASK

There was nothing Gilbert wouldn't do for Abby
He kissed her forehead tenderly.

At Snug Haven he led her into married life, carefully, tenderly, compassionately. He never forgot himself, nor could he easily forget himself. More affectionate than passionate, his emotions were neither weak enough nor strong enough to possess him. They interested him less than thought, and trickled comfortably into dreams and ideals, the best thought of his time, the current dreams. He gave Abby all he had to give, and Abby, in her emotional exhaustion, wanted no more.

To deepen their communion, he wanted to tell her everything, and Abby agreed (inevitably, wonderfully they agreed) that husband and wife should tell each other everything.

The day before they left Snug Haven it stormed. The wind, on a clamorous chase, crashed at the sea. It ripped trees; some shed leaves with flat wet spatters; others merely stretched against each other, moaning, as if frustrated in that inexorable chase, ending nowhere. A foghorn wailed. Another roared. Ships passed, their whistles howling.

"This is a wonderful day for our confessional," smiled Gilbert.

Their little sitting room, bright with cretonne curtains and green plush chairs and pink satin cushions, was warmed with a cozy red blaze which chuckled in a fireplace. It was the only private sitting room at the Snug Haven Inn, and when Gilbert hoped it wasn't too small, Abby laughed at him.

"You must think I'm spoiled!"

"I want you to be comfortable," he said, earnestly.

Now Abby, in a rust-colored chiffon tea gown trimmed with deep tan lace that slid swishing across an apricot satin under-slip—Abby, his princess in a fairy tale—was pouring out his

RED DAMASK

coffee. That square diamond on her finger had been his gift. That platinum wedding ring was theirs. Abby was his wife!

"Abby dear, I can't believe it." He sat back and looked across the breakfast table at her, adoring her, a worshiper at a shrine. "I used to dream about this happening, but I never thought it really would. Mother used to say I was living in castles in Spain. And I used to say that everybody made his own world, why shouldn't mine be a castle in Spain if it made me happy? But no castle in Spain could touch this!"

Abby smiled. It was pleasant to be worshiped, and surely Gilbert was the knight of her dreams. In every way he was so considerate, so fine. And how straight his features were, how clear were his gray eyes! Friendly boyish eyes he had, and his mouth was sweet, and boyish, too. Abby liked his brown hair and the smooth way it brushed from his high forehead, and the way it was cut, cleanly, at the neck, and the way his collar fitted. Even his tie was such a pretty fawnlike gray. It was fun to pour your husband's breakfast coffee. Rested, as she hadn't been for months, she thought how thrilling it was to be a bride, to have the guests at the Inn interested, an interest embarrassing yet fun.

She jumped up and ran around the table and kissed Gilbert, a long, long kiss. Back in her seat, demurely, she buttered a roll with mock solicitude.

"Don't drink that water, Abby!" Gilbert got up and rang a bell on the door jamb. "Why, they forgot to bring Merlin water!"

"Oh, I never bother."

"You should. It's foolish to take chances with water in places like this. One should be careful."

Abby almost wished that Gilbert wouldn't be quite so careful.

"Now let's begin the story of our pa-sts. Mine begins with,

RED DAMASK

"When Abby was a tiny tot,
E'en then did Gilbert after her trot."

"Wasn't that an awful poem! And Aunt Sophie thinks Vicky could be a second Elizabeth Browning!"

"Families wear rose-colored spectacles. But we didn't have much family life, you know. Most of the Wares live out in Chicago and Uncle Steve is the only Riemann left. Honestly, Abby, didn't you sometimes get a little tired of it?"

Abby almost resented Gilbert's saying what she might have said. None of her aunts were as silly as Mrs. Riemann, she thought, illogically. Her family were intelligent. But they compromised with their ideals. Should she tell Gilbert? Yes! She would and should tell her husband everything.

There was a knock at the door. The waiter brought a bottle of Merlin water and poured it.

"Your story first," said Abby, after he left.

"Not much story," said Gilbert. "I was sick a lot when I was a youngster, and at college . . ."

"Tell me about college! I was crazy to go to college. Did you make a lot of interesting contacts? Karl is so unsociable, of course he didn't. Did you run into any prejudice?"

"We didn't give it a chance. Leonard Tellander was in my class, and Ed Ringler and a lot of fellows I knew, and we stuck together. You're homesick when you first get there, and fellows you know are a touch of home. It's a task to make new contacts. Of course we didn't get into a fraternity. Jewish boys never do."

"Dudley Kenheim did!"

"Well, Dud's different. He had a car there . . . and he went in for sports. Didn't stick with his old crowd. Dud never considers anything but himself."

"I know," said Abby, her voice strained. "Gilbert . . . I

RED DAMASK

want to tell you . . . I think I ought to. . . . I . . . I . . . thought I was in love with Dudley this summer."

"I heard. And, oh, Abby, you don't know how miserable I was."

Abby went to the window and watched a giant wave surge, a live black-purple arch, which flung itself and broke, seething on a great black rock, its rainbow bubbles the only color under that moving gray torn sky. Wind hurled spray and rain against the small glass panes and suddenly Abby wanted to open the window and feel them on her face. She flung her head up and back in a queer exultation, a oneness with the tumult, in tune with its vitality.

"Come away from the window, Abby. They built this place much too close to the ocean."

Obediently Abby sat on the green plush sofa, a soft plush sofa in front of the fire, and Gilbert piled pink satin cushions back of her. Then as if under a solemn vow on a celestial witness stand, she described every drive, every talk, every dance, she had had with Dudley. She told about the night she thought he was going to propose. Staring at the arc one apricot slipper traced over and over on the hearth rug, she told how he had kissed her and how she had wanted him to. As if Gilbert were some strange priest behind a screen, she was unaware of him. She was unaware of reactions against sofas and satins, and of obscure associations. ("Don't let them smother your soul with red damask.") Beyond vanity, she was intoxicated with the violence of wind and sea; with the violence of letting herself go.

The waiter came for the tray. Gilbert signed the check. She looked at him. Her intoxication died.

His eyes were filled with tears. His lips were white.

The waiter left.

She sank down on the floor by Gilbert's chair and, facing

RED DAMASK

him, took his hands. "I know that was the wrong kind of love, Gilbert," she said. "It wasn't spiritual like ours. We didn't agree about anything. Except art. Oh, Gilbert, I'm ashamed!"

She hid her burning face and was ashamed, and Gilbert tried to forget his hurt and comfort her. He did forget it. He went into a castle in Spain—the castle of things as he thought they ought to be. He agreed. (It was wonderful how they agreed.)

"It wasn't our kind of love, Abby dear. Dudley was just a step on your way to me. Aren't we lucky to love each other the finer way? I know what you mean better than you do. You're too innocent to understand. And it's different with a man. You're too sweet and innocent. Shivering? Abby, are you cold? I'll ring for the boy to put more logs on the fire."

He rang. A boy came, took a log out of the wood box, put it on the fire, and Gilbert tipped him.

"Don't sit on the floor, Abby dear."

The sofa seemed comfortable now, for she was tired. Gilbert sat beside her and put one hand over hers. "Abby, when a man marries a girl like you, you don't know how he regrets things he's done . . . sordid experiences. . . . One hates to think of them. . . . How I used to hate myself as soon as I began putting on my shoes afterward"

Slowly Abby drew her hand away. "What do you mean?"

Gilbert staring at the fire, watching a sliver of wood break with a small blue sputter, was trying to remember the woman in a place in West Thirty-ninth street that his brother Lewis had taken him to when he was twenty-one. He could only remember her saying, "So I'm honored?" when she found she was the first. That and Lewis waiting for him at the elevated station afterward; and mixed with a little male pride the feeling that life was pretty sordid, which he was supposed to feel after such a regrettable but necessary episode. Then there was the French

RED DAMASK

girl on the Riviera, the friend of Leonard Tellander's girl. He couldn't remember anything about her but her metallic blond hair and the way she nagged him to take her to Spain. "I suppose you couldn't understand . . . women. . . ." he murmured. "Not the kind of women you could ever know. . . . A man's life. . . ." Embarrassment choked him.

Abby turned, "Gilbert, you mean that you—you!—have had experiences? . . ." If only he hadn't spoken of putting his shoes on afterward. . . . It made things too clear. . . .

Half sorry, half proud, he nodded; there had been neither joy nor beauty in any of them, and he should have kept himself for Abby; though Abby, in her innocent way, had not kept herself for him! Not that he put them on the same plane, not even in his thoughts, but, after all, a man must be a man and he had seen life!

"Oh, Gilbert! Not really! I thought you were different. I thought you were one person in the world . . ." Abby swallowed painfully, trying to realize what he had said. It belied an old conception, long cherished, of a Gilbert who shared her standards and was a perfect knight.

"All men are alike, sweetheart. And it isn't worth while. It isn't."

There was a knock at the door. The waiter wanted their order for lunch.

"What would you like for lunch, Abby?"

"I don't care."

"Let's see." Gilbert studied the menu. "You might bring a little filet of sole, and potatoes, hashed brown. Fix up a nice salad. And some simple dessert—stewed fruit. And, waiter, don't forget to bring Merlin water. I think we'd better have some tea on such a chilly day. Orange Pekoe. Wouldn't you like some tea, Abby?"

RED DAMASK

Abby didn't answer.

The waiter left.

Back of Abby, Gilbert leaned down and kissed her hair, reaching for her hand. It was cold.

She snatched it away.

"Oh, don't you touch me!" She stood, her rust-colored draperies swirling around her. "Isn't there any goodness in this world? You're just as bad as Dudley, only you're more careful. Let me alone. I hate you. Do you hear? Hate you! I never want to see you again!"

She dashed into the bedroom and locked the door.

Bewildered, like a slapped child, Gilbert put his hand to his face. Through the door he heard hard, dry sobs. And he who wanted to save her every pain had caused them. And, oh, how she had hurt him! He hated Dudley Kenheim.

"Abby darling! Please!" he pleaded.

Nothing but that horrible sobbing answered him. And the storm shook the windows viciously. He had thought they were so cozy by their fireside, alone together, sheltered. He had thought . . . What did it matter what he had thought? He was miserable now.

The waiter brought lunch.

After he left, Gilbert went to the door. "Abby! Sweetheart! Lunch is here. Wouldn't you like some nice filet of sole? You can't go without your lunch."

There was no answer.

"Abby, I want to talk to you."

There was no answer. Now even the wind was quiet.

"Abby, here's a cup of hot tea. You should drink it while it's hot."

There was no answer.

RED DAMASK

Gilbert was annoyed. "Really, Abby, I have to get to the bathroom to wash my hands."

A key clicked in the lock. Draperies rustled. The bed creaked as Abby threw herself down on it.

Gilbert opened the door and went past a silent mass of chiffon and lace and tumbled hair.

As he came back he stopped, bent over, pushed her hair from her face, and started to kiss her. She shrank away. "Don't touch me," she whispered through shut teeth.

"Had you rather I wouldn't sleep in here tonight?" said Gilbert.

"It is a matter of utter indifference to me where you sleep."

Alone sat Gilbert at luncheon. When he remembered their happy breakfast, his nice gray eyes filled with tears.

Abby's chair was empty.

At first he couldn't eat.

But the filet of sole, aromatic, goldy-browned, reminded him that starving wouldn't help anything. He ate some. Lettuce arranged flower-petal fashion around a heap of tiny boiled beet hearts reminded him that the waiter had taken pains, and the beet hearts were tender, properly cooked. He ate them.

Gilbert's capacity for pain and pleasure equalled. Already he felt better. The storm was over; the sun was trying to shine; and he decided that it was sweet to find Abby so innocent, right that she should want him pure. It showed how much she loved him. He lit a cigar.

He went over to the door and knocked.

"Abby, your tea is still hot, and I've put your fish over by the fire. Abby . . . please speak to me."

But there was no answer.

This was going a bit far

RED DAMASK

He flung his cigar, unfinished, into the grate. He walked up and down the room. Restless, he wanted to go out for some air, though it was soggy underfoot and his rubbers were in the bedroom. Go in there for them? He would not, to be rebuffed again!

He went out without them, he who caught colds so easily. If he got one now, Abby would be sorry. It would be her fault. He splashed in every puddle.

He dined downstairs and sent a tray to the bedroom. He couldn't bear the thought of Abby going without food.

Where was he going to sleep? What would the clerk think if he asked for an extra bedroom? No, he couldn't do that. There was only the sofa in the sitting-room. But how does one sleep on a sofa? A honeymoon quarrel was natural; it would pass; but a night on a sofa was different. Gilbert had never spent a night on a sofa. 🐾

Surely when he went for his night things Abby would realize that enough was enough. But she didn't. Still on the bed with her face in a pillow, she wouldn't look at him. He stalked to the closet for his dressing gown and slippers, and slammed the bureau drawer where he kept his nightshirts. He unstrapped the steamer rugs. Surely that would bring her to her senses! But it didn't.

Satin pillows scratched and stuck to your face. The sofa wasn't long enough, and Gilbert's legs cramped or went to sleep. One steamer rug wasn't warm enough and two were too warm.

It was a terrible experience.

They were to motor to Boston the next morning and sail from there.

But Gilbert awakened from fitful slumber with a queer feeling in his throat when he cleared it harshly. He wasn't sure that his nose wasn't stuffy.

RED DAMASK

Meanwhile Abby, in a pretty trousseau nightgown of softest peach-colored crêpe de Chine trimmed with finest Irish lace, had writhed on her bed with a feeling of unutterable calamity, unutterable loss, her sense of proportion deafened by a refrain which echoed through her mind:

"You married Gilbert,
Because he was good,
Because he was pure.
And he isn't pure,
He isn't pure."

As if Gilbert had married her under false pretenses, she resented him, a resentment that comfortably deafened disturbing thoughts about herself. Abby couldn't tolerate a self stripped of those upholsteries she padded facts with, a self untrue to her ideals. Marriage as a refuge from hurt pride, marriage for a home of her own, an escape from Forty-ninth street, tore them; marriage as a reaction from emotional exhaustion violated them.

As always, she drew a conclusion, another sickening refrain, persistent, like the chorus of a popular song:

"Is there no purity,
Is there no goodness,
Anywhere?
Anywhere?
Anywhere?"

Gilbert had had every sign. So had Santa Claus. "Dear Santa Claus, please bring me a doll with real eyelashes if I am a good girl." Being good to get presents?

Arguments chased memories.

How many signs the family had! "Through diligence and character Grandfather founded Philip Hahl & Company, a

RED DAMASK

service to the community—" It made money for the family, didn't it? Grandfather's name headed every charity list. Did he ever give anything without telling about it, and didn't he enjoy being generous? Did he ever sacrifice anything? . . . "Mother thinks only of her children." Karl's tragic boyish scowl when Mother said: "Karl, I told Hilda to throw away all those dead plants on your desk. I can't have your room littered." Mother thinks only of her things! . . . "There is no joy like family life." Abby, in a leghorn hat with forget-me-nots, and a muslin dress trimmed in black velvet baby ribbon making a sand house on the beach. She could see it now, built around a fountain, with dabs on the top to look like tile. She wanted to finish it before the tide came in, but it was time for her walk with Grandfather. Being spanked because she wanted to finish it first. There is no tyranny like family life!

In the hotel corridor outside Abby's door, a woman scolded a bellboy because the Boston papers hadn't come, but Abby only heard family phrases and answered them with memory pictures. Excitement often roused an analytic Abby, analytic about everything but herself and the excitement's cause. She went on.

"One should be grateful to one's parents." Aunt Sophie wagging her head with pride when Uncle Elias called her the Spartan mother, saying, "Discipline cured my William of nightmare." He stayed awake to escape it. "William must go back to Munich and show he has character." Why, Aunt Sophie, with her precious Spartan motherhood, murdered William, the real, the gifted William! . . . "One's parents always know best." Mother and Father wouldn't let her go to college, wouldn't let her study architecture. Oh, how she wished she had a profession now! . . . Matthew Heron's eyes flashing behind his glasses: "Say you're going to visit a friend. Then when we've found out whether you've got enough to fight for, you can strike

RED DAMASK

out for yourself." That had been her chance, to study on the sly. No. She had done the right thing. Character must come first. What was right? What, wrong? What if they were only words, or abstract like Santa Claus? . . . No, her parents' teaching could be right, even if they weren't. And Gilbert . . .

"You married Gilbert,
Because he was good,
Because he was pure.
And he isn't pure.
He isn't pure."

The sea pounded, though the wind was still. Abby pushed a blanket off, shivered, and pulled it up again. Sleepless, she felt an eager, tired despair.

Everyone she had ever known had disappointed her. Donna saying, "What a body don't know don't hurt a body." Planning to see Hunter Latimer after she was engaged to Karl. Jack Bernstein changing his name, denying his Judaism. And Dudley. Dudley, like Donna, didn't pretend to any ideals. And yet she had thought she loved him.

Hot waves of shame seethed over her. Her breath was all in her throat. How queer she felt! Was she going to be sick?

She forgot about her breath. For what was there in her that let her love people who hadn't character? And what was character?

What was that something that Karl put into his work? It wasn't ideals or standards. Father had the same exalted look about a special sale at the store, and Donna, one night at Leitha Beach, hadn't heard her name called when she was out on the sand with a star map. How her eyes had glittered in the dark, phosphorescent with excitement! Was that right or wrong?

On Grandfather's sixty-fifth birthday, she too had lost her-

RED DAMASK

self, drawing in the Museum, forgetting her duties, thinking only of herself. No. She hadn't thought of herself at all. Nor of others. But didn't thinking of others usually mean trying to rule them, like Aunt Sophie and Mother? Didn't thinking of others, like Grandfather's philanthropy, mean feeding your egotism, patronizing the poor? It was different from an old rabbi she had seen with his flock in Houston street. And how different from Dr. Leopold was that rabbi's fervor, his Judaism; it had a sort of thrill to it. Soldiers must be like that when they go into battle. Juliet, Héloïse, got that ecstasy from love. . . .

Suddenly Abby felt lonely, very, very lonely, and tired and afraid. She remembered Mother: "Now, Abby, whatever your husband asks of you is right." Mother couldn't lose herself. Abby knew she couldn't. Maybe that enchanted exaltation was rare and had to be served ruthlessly or lost. Maybe few ever knew it. Then how about people being born free and equal? Shouldn't every standard apply to all? Maybe it was wrong, then, that extra electrical force. Maybe it was the rightest thing, the purest thing. . . . It was living most intensely, and wasn't life living? . . . Matthew Heron's eager face, blue eyes blazing: "Isn't that great, eh, Abby? Isn't that great?" His hand, that held some drawing of Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, shaking with excitement. . . .

Had she gone crazy to run away like that from his office, the day Gilbert's mother died? Of course he hadn't meant anything. "Idiot! Fool! Fool!" she ground out of shut teeth. How he sneered at things. "Don't mix ethics with æsthetics, Abby." Was nobody true to real ideals? Uncle Cyrus Hardenburg was. He gave up his profession for his family—and tyrannized over them. He made actual sacrifices to give to the poor—and insisted on his family's making them. . . .

Abby dared not ask herself if Gilbert had that gift of ecstasy.

RED DAMASK

She could rip the past and look at family standards, a painful sight she sought, out of a sane instinct for balance. She had to face some pain, and she dared not rip the silken pads that hid an ugly now. Nor would she argue practically that, married to Gilbert, she couldn't divorce him because he wasn't pure. Instead she covered self-analysis with resentment of Gilbert's past; she covered analyzing Gilbert with resentment of the family. And then, ingeniously, her need for adaptation found a third refrain:

"You were happy,
So was Gilbert,
Before the confessional.
What good did it do?
What good did it do?
What good . . ."

And then she slept.

The next morning Gilbert knocked on the door. Abby opened it.

"I beg your pardon, Abby, but I have to ask you to let me have the trunk keys before the porter comes. I want to get out the silk handkerchiefs I use for colds." Sighing, he sniffed and cleared his throat.

"Oh, Gilbert, are you getting a cold?"

It was her fault that he had gone in the wet without rubbers. She had seen him from the window and she hadn't cared. It was her fault that he had spent the night on a sofa. Dark circles swung under his eyes and his lips looked white.

"It doesn't matter," said Gilbert, nobly.

"Of course it matters! Do you think we ought to take that motor trip to Boston? Do you think we ought to sail today?"

"I didn't know you cared. From the way you talked yesterday,

RED DAMASK

"I shouldn't think you'd care if I got pneumonia." He found a silk handkerchief and used it mournfully.

If he got pneumonia it would be her fault. He looked worn out, pathetically appealing.

"Oh, Gilbert!" She went close to him and he took her in his arms.

"I mustn't kiss you. You might get my cold."

She didn't. He had none. But it served its purpose.

At Liverpool Abby wired Karl for news of Donna.

Karl answered: "Donna very sick. Condition serious. Girl. Karl."

Abby and Gilbert hurried to Berlin.

In a white hospital room in a white hospital bed Donna's eyes looked like round black bruises in a gray-white face. Her funny stubby nose stuck out queerly from sunken cheeks; her chin was a bony ledge. Pillows propped one leg under the covers, horridly. It seemed detached.

Karl assured Abby that Donna was out of danger now, though still, after four weeks, in pain. Clinically he told how Donna had had a hemorrhage at the beginning of labor; she had to be packed suddenly; instruments had to be used. Everything happened so suddenly that the infection that followed was almost unavoidable. It gave her phlebitis, an inflammation of the lining of a vein in the leg, with the formation of a clot, which, if detached, might have gone to the lungs, causing death, a danger now past for Donna.

Wan, shaken, Karl swore with every other breath not to have another child. He, who had had six months' obstetrical work at Johns Hopkins, told himself that he didn't know it was like this. Donna was the only person on earth Karl cared for. To

RED DAMASK

risk losing her for a little red thing that looked like a monkey wasn't logical.

Abby had a few minutes alone with Donna.

"See our sweet little missing link?" she whispered. Then: "How do you like married life?"

Abby had bent low to hear her. "Gilbert is very considerate," she straightened and replied.

"Is that what you want?" Donna grinned. "I like caveman stuff. But that reminds me of an experience meeting down home . . ."

"Ought you talk so much?" Abby interrupted, anxiously.

"It won't hurt me. Such a relief to talk English." Donna shut her eyes for a moment and then went on: "Anyway, nothing happened to my mouth. At that revival meeting, Abby, everybody got up and told what the Lord had done for them. And finally a one-eyed cripple with a harelip got up and he said: 'Brethren, take a look at me. He mighty nigh ruint me.'"

Donna laughed a weak, cracked laugh.

Worried, Abby laid her hand on Donna's forehead.

Donna reached up and patted it. "Listen, Abby honey," she murmured. "You're all for reform. Can you tell me the name of a race suicide society? I want to join it."

Chapter Nine

IN NOVEMBER, two days after Abby and Gilbert returned from Europe, they were in the Wares' front parlor, discussing Regina's wedding to Elmer Rhone.

Lewis Ware drummed on the window sill, watching the clock. He'd be late for an appointment with Stella, and Stella, clinging to the minor virtues, sulked when he was late. For four years he had been faithful to Stella, though she nagged him and sometimes drank too much. That disgusted him, his ideals being high for womanhood, however frail.

He was Gilbert's brother, and Abby tried not to dislike him. But every time he drummed on the window sill she frowned, irritated, she who had been free of nerves. Lewis had led Gilbert astray in his youth. After Regina's marriage, Lewis's living with them would blur independence in a home of her own. Lewis talked about old associations and poor business when Gilbert spoke of redecorating the house. "Business always picks up at Christmas," said Gilbert. "The dining room's shabby and Abby wants to get away from red damask. Everybody has it. We'll begin on the dining room."

Lewis agreed, unaware of Abby's quickness. He was startled now to see a decorator's estimate on the mantelpiece, for he had delayed telling Gilbert (the younger brother just returned from a honeymoon) how poor business was.

But having to consult Lewis irritated Abby, and Elmer Rhone, Regina's fiancé, irritated her.

RED DAMASK

He was a braggart, a climber, newly rich and overpolite. Regina giggled when he leaped around the dinner table to officiate at Abby's chair. She winked at Abby when he crooked his little finger over his coffee cup, but she adored his physique. His family was obscure, but Regina cared nothing for social distinctions. He wasn't idealistic; neither was she.

"I know you don't like him, Abby," said Regina, cheerfully. "He is crazy about poker and likes to bet on everything instead of reading deep books and uplifting the poor. But, you know, he's stunning! Doesn't he look like What's-his-name in *The Garden of Allah*?"

Regina's values were skin-deep, but Abby, who used to dislike her, liked her now. She admired Abby, a little awefully, and plunging into her plans gave Abby something to do.

Gilbert was not happy about Regina's engagement, but he wouldn't (and couldn't) interfere. He said everybody had to live his own life, melody to ears sick of "One should consult one's family's wishes." Gilbert's spirituality, his tastes and interests, contrasted with Lewis's materialism, with everything about Elmer. Elmer looked at you significantly, holding your gaze, as if to say, "Answer my eyes first." Gilbert's clear gray eyes met yours straightly, kindly, sincerely.

They smiled at Abby now.

How close she felt to him, how completely one! . . . How dear he was in that silly gilt armchair, puffing a cigarette (a denicotined cigarette). His hands holding it moved her, his slender well-kept hands. Not irritated any more, she wanted to dash over and hold them tight. But she wouldn't, not with Elmer and Regina on the sofa. She had thought that if Elmer kissed Regina again like that she'd scream. Instead, she thought of Gilbert now, and how they belonged to each other. (In Europe both

RED DAMASK

had seemed strenuously to belong to railway guides!) And the long Pullmanlike room with its gilt-scrolled ceiling and white-paneled walls, stopped being garish and seemed all of a piece, friendly; and the lights glowed . . . too.

Lewis compared his watch with the clock, sighed, and stood by the mantelpiece. "Well, that settles everything, doesn't it? Merne's to fix the altar here. Sanbach to play the violin, and Doctor Leopold to officiate. I'm off. Sorry, but I've got to hurry." He picked up the decorator's estimate and put it down. "Gil, get an early start with me in the morning, will you, old man? I must have a talk with you on the way to the store and I have an important appointment at the Flower National at nine-fifteen." Bad news could be delayed no longer.

Gently, expertly, Elmer drew away from Regina. "But the guests! We haven't decided who is going to listen to our blissful wedding bells."

"Oh, there's no decision to be made," said Lewis, impatiently, from the folding doors. "A regular family wedding, of course. Aunts and first cousins."

"I don't see why . . . a few intimate friends . . ." The beautiful mouth looked stubborn.

"Our mother has been dead only four months," said Gilbert, quietly. "But whom did you have in mind? If some classmate . . ."

"I'm not a college man," blustered Elmer. "I had to get to work!"

"I forgot," murmured Gilbert. "But if some special friend . . ."

"There's nobody I want to ask, outside my family. But I should think it would be a nice thing to do. . . ." Elmer hesitated. "Wouldn't it be nice to have Mr. Kenheim, for instance?"

RED DAMASK

Regina giggled. "Oh, Elmer, aren't you a scream! Why should we have Mr. Kenheim?" She grimaced, imitating the way Mr. Kenheim brushed a lock of hair across his forehead and put his thumb under a coat lapel.

Nobody noticed her.

"That's out of the question," said Lewis, brusquely. "I'm off. Don't forget, Gilbert. Breakfast at quarter to eight, sharp. It's important." He slid the doors behind him.

Evidently his wedding was not important! Elmer Rhone had created a successful brokerage firm through beating down opposition and "getting there" first. He wouldn't have this smug pair managing his affairs! They had made a mess of their own. There were ominous rumors about "Ware's." And he wanted Mr. Kenheim, the most prominent American Jew, at his wedding. These people were intimate with Mr. Kenheim. Why should they shut out their intimates because the old lady wasn't dead long enough?

Elmer was fond of Regina, in his way. She was a pretty little thing and she knew how to dress. He wouldn't have married her if she hadn't been a Ware. His marriage must count. He had made money. He wanted to join the Hillside Country Club and the Concorde Club. In every way he wanted to show that he belonged with the best families. He wouldn't stand for anybody's blocking him!

"I don't see why the only suggestion I've made for this wedding should be out of the question," he said.

"I don't see why you want Mr. Kenheim," said Gilbert, innocently. "He's a much older man and . . ."

"I bet I can guess." Regina gave her little tinkling laugh. "He wants to show his old West Side friends that he can have the gr-eat sugar king at his wedding." She gesticulated, palms

RED DAMASK

up: "Say-y, vat you t'ink, that Elmer Rhone he's moving mit Kenheim, alretty."

She took Elmer's hand, surprised when he snatched it away.

"Doesn't it 'ike to be teased, then?" she said in baby talk.

"Regina!" said Gilbert, impatiently.

"I'd . . . I . . ." said Elmer, inarticulately. His eyes, glassy with rage, were not pleasant to see.

"Elmer," said Abby, "Regina doesn't mean anything. She likes to tease. And I'm afraid you're wrong about Mr. Kenheim. He wouldn't come if we invited him, because he would know that we would want only the family, under the circumstances."

Gilbert nodded gratefully. "Let's be getting along, Abby. Good night, Elmer."

"Good night," muttered Elmer. This time he forgot to get up from his chair when Abby did.

"I'm going," he said to Regina. He started off.

Like a dancing doll on a music box, she ran in front of him, putting up her tiny arms, raising her impish little face for a kiss. "Elmer, I don't see why you should be mad." She never could see what she didn't feel.

"Don't you?" said Elmer, coldly.

He left without kissing her.

Tears of disappointment filled her light blue eyes. She met Gilbert on the stair landing.

He caught her elbows gently. "Regina, dear little sister, I'm afraid you won't be happy with this man. He isn't our sort. If you have the least little doubt—it isn't too late—you can break it off now."

"I wouldn't break it off for anything! I want him!" she said.

She read herself sleepy with a sweet new book by Myrtle Reed. It wasn't morbid; it took your mind off your troubles. And she knew that Elmer would telephone in the morning.

RED DAMASK

Upstairs, Gilbert said, "Abby, I'm worried about this marriage of Regina's, but she wants to go on with it, and, after all, it's her life."

Abby came close to him. "Thu-ump. Thu—ump," went her heart, as if a trowel lifted, pushed, ploughed through her breast, hurting. Her knees weakened. She could have fallen back on the chaise longue there, eyes closed, faint, alone. But she didn't want to.

"Gilbert," she whispered, "I can't worry about anything tonight."

All of her seemed to swim in fragrance like violets, like sunlight; in touch like silver cords, throbbing; like radium, heavenly sparks of pain.

"You darling!" he murmured.

He undressed quickly, and looked at Abby before he turned off the light. How deep and dark her eyes were, how smiling her lips. How flushed her face was, the color of that peach-colored gown. And how fast her breath came!

Then his breath came fast, in unison, attuned.

He forgot himself.

He swam in sweetness, lost in it, giving ecstasy and gaining it. At last, in each other's arms, they slept.

Gilbert was not at breakfast at a quarter to eight.

Regina had hers then and hurried off to fit her wedding dress.

It was nine o'clock when Effie, the waitress, served Gilbert's breakfast.

Effie was Mrs. Ware's efficiency immortalized. On twenty April firsts Effie had watched every bureau drawer scrubbed with vinegar. On twenty November firsts and twenty March firsts Effie had helped the chambermaid send pillows to be re-stuffed. On a thousand Fridays she had stood over the useful

RED DAMASK

maid while she polished silver bathroom mugs. Now such tasks were trusts from the dead. Otherwise she hoarded her money and read newspaper scandals and avidly watched the family. "Mr. Lewis was upset over your not being down yet, Mr. Gilbert," she said. "Mr. Lewis said you should come straight by his office just as soon as you get by the store."

"Oh, I can't do that!" murmured Gilbert. "No eggs. Just a cup of strong coffee this morning. I might try a little dry toast. I have an appointment with the decorator in fifteen minutes." He sneezed.

"Mr. Gilbert, I don't like them dark circles under your eyes already." Effie looked pleased. Colds meant important activity. "I hope you aren't getting one of your colds."

Gilbert used his handkerchief. "I hope not, too."

Abby came in rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed, cheerfully smiling.

"Good morning, Effie. Tell Ida I'd like some cereal this morning. My! I'm hungry! Isn't it a heavenly day!" She beamed at Gilbert.

"I'm afraid I'm getting one of my colds," said he.

"Oh no, you won't. Don't think about it. Use Christian Science."

Effie put the silver coffee service in front of Abby and Abby smiled up at her. "Don't you believe in Christian Science, Effie—for colds, I mean?"

"Not for Mr. Gilbert's colds. And you won't, neither, when you've lived with them for twenty years, Mrs. Gilbert," said Effie as she went through the pantry's swinging door.

Abby laughed. "She must have gotten her optimism from your Aunt Clara Riemann. But she's a wonder. I hardly have a thing to do about the housekeeping. I'm going to get terribly spoiled. Do you know what I'm going to do this morning? I'm going to market and then I'm going to walk in the Park

RED DAMASK

and look at the animals until it's time for my lecture at Columbia. It's too wonderful to stay indoors a minute. There isn't a city in the world with sunlight like ours!"

"Yes, but think of the damp," said Gilbert, sepulchrally.

"Don't think of it," she said, playfully, in a deep voice.

Gilbert sighed. He felt irritable, sure sign of a cold, but he mustn't show it. "Abby, are you perfectly satisfied with this color scheme? You were so quick about it. You won't get tired of mulberry in this room?"

"Tired of it? I simply adore it. There's nobody like Bazaine. And he said I had a feeling for color. Wasn't that sweet of him? But Mr. Heron, my old teacher, trained me. If we ever build a country house, Gilbert, we must have Mr. Heron do it. He's a wonder and he's had such a hard time."

"Yes? . . . I've got to hurry. Would you wear your heavy coat or the gray? . . ."

"The gray! I'll bet the air is like wine. Gilbert! Aren't you going to kiss me good-by!"

He bent and kissed her.

"Abby," he said, uneasily, "wives don't kiss like that."

For a second Abby was hurt. Too happy to stay hurt, she laughed.

"I'm not wives, Mr. Mormon. I'm a wife. Your particular wife."

Gilbert didn't smile. He went downstairs.

"Effie, which coat would you wear? The gray or my heavy one?" Abby heard him say.

"You'd better wear the heavy one, Mr. Gilbert. There's a chill in this air."

Abby went into the parlor, pushed the curtains aside, and looked out of the window. She felt as if birds fluttered singing

RED DAMASK

through her veins, as if she could fly through that bright sunlight. How it silvered roofs and gilded glass; but the windows on that building looked like mother-of-pearl, glistening, translucent.

Across the street, two gay little girls in bottle-green coats pranced up a stoop while a fat governess argued with the cabman. A messenger passed, whistling. Two jolly old men laughed as they went by. Abby lifted her arms high above her head. She couldn't keep them down. "Isn't it wonderful to be happy!" she hummed in tune with clink-clink—clinketty-clink, from the corner where the street was being repaired. "Um!" She sniffed. "I love the smell of tar."

"Mrs. Gilbert," said Effie's voice, trembling, "Mrs. Ware never liked those curtains that way, with the sun fading this furniture."

Amazed, Abby turned. Effie's eyes glittered like black-headed pins, her impertinence heroism in such a well-trained Austrian servant. "The sun is bright," said Abby, kindly, letting the curtains fall.

Effie ran to answer the telephone.

Mother wanted Abby. "What are you doing for lunch today?"

"Nothing in particular."

"Alone for lunch!" Mother was shocked. "Now, Abby, when you're alone you should always come here. Why didn't you let me know? Well, Aunt Sophie was coming today, but William isn't so well, and Gretchen is making apple strudel, with Grandfather lunching at the club—his skät day, you know. Gretchen would be so disappointed and she's such a wonderful cook. *Gott halte Sie gesund.*"

"I'll come to the rescue," said Abby, though she wanted to rebel against too many family duties. But how could she rebel against anything now?

RED DAMASK

"What are you doing? You'd have time to come down to the store with me before your class at Columbia. They have some really good Limoges in the china department and I noticed your fruit plates were too small. We'll call some new ones an extra birthday present."

"Now I can't go look at the animals. That would be no excuse for mother!" thought Abby.

When she told Effie she'd be out for lunch, Effie sniffed.

"Ida is making a pâté out of those sweetbreads you ordered."

"Tell her to have it as an entrée for dinner. Effie, you will be pleased. Mother is going to give us some new fruit plates. Ours are too small."

Effie wasn't pleased. Yesterday Mrs. Gilbert sent Mrs. Ware's goldfish bowl to the Hebrew Infant's Asylum, the goldfish bowl from Vienna, with potted plants around it on a marble table, which Effie had tended for twenty years, telling Mrs. Ware each day what she'd done for it. Mrs. Gilbert looked impatient when you told her all the things you'd done. Wasn't it Mrs. Gilbert's place to listen, as well as hers to do? And letting the sun in on Mrs. Ware's furniture and not getting mad at being spoken to about it. A lady ought to get mad! If she'd take an inch she'd take an ell. "Mrs. Ware never found them plates too small," said Effie.

But Abby thought how Effie had lived in Mrs. Ware's life, and how dreadful it was to be an old maid, anyway! Effie wasn't fifty, but her face was as withered as an English walnut. Why should Abby Hahl have everything and this woman nothing?

"We'll use our old fruit plates except when my mother dines with us. They're very pretty," said Abby, gently.

Effie, half mollified, half contemptuous, almost smiled.

"Life is full of arranging petty things," thought Abby philo-

RED DAMASK

sophically. In Paradise she could be philosophical about pettiness; keeping it, in proportion, in its place.

Then she took the stairs two at a time. Where was her married dignity?

"O, dass sie ewig grünen bliebe,
Die schöne Zeit der jungen Liebe,"

hummed Abby.

That afternoon Abby left a Women's Civic Club meeting before it passed a resolution on housing. She had joined the club when it was organized, serving on several committees as a civic duty. But now, being home to welcome Gilbert seemed even more important.

A naïve Lorelei in an apple-green dressing gown with a little fish-tail train, Abby had started brushing her hair when she heard his ring, one long and then a short quick peal. She ran to her door and through the stairwell; up two flights she heard Effie say, "I thought you were getting one, Mr. Gilbert."

A nose blew dismally and Gilbert's step dragged on the stairs. Abby was startled when she saw him.

He went past her open arms and sank down on the chaise longue in their bedroom.

"Gilbert! what's the matter!"

"I didn't want to tell you until after dinner. Ka-choo! Ka-choo! My God! Abby, what have you got that window open for?"

She closed it.

"What on earth? You're not really sick, are you? Mother is expecting us . . ."

"For Heaven's sake, call that off! I can't go out for dinner

RED DAMASK

tonight." Gilbert closed his eyes, relaxed, and pulled a knitted afghan over his feet.

Abby used the bedside telephone.

"But, Abby, if Gilbert just has a cold," protested Mother. "Grandfather will be so disappointed. It would do Gilbert good to come. Gretchen is making noodle soup and Uncle Stanley and Aunt Olive are coming."

"I know, but Gilbert . . ."

Gilbert frowned impatiently.

"I'm afraid Gilbert needs me now, Mother. Yes, I'll tell him. Five grains of quinine a half hour apart. Yes, I'll take his temperature. Good-by."

"I haven't any temperature. Doctor Aram took it. I stopped there for a treatment. It's just one of my regular fall colds."

Abby rang for Effie. "Effie, can you and Marie find some dinner for us? I would have had Ida change her day off if I'd thought . . ."

"I knew you'd be home for dinner, madam," said Effie, grimly. "Ida changed her day and there's a roasting chicken in the house."

After Effie left, Abby sat on the end of the chaise longue and took Gilbert's hand. "Now what is the matter?" she asked.

"Watch out, Abby dear. Don't get too close. I don't want you to get my cold. Better tell Marie to fix my bed in Mother's room tonight. Doctor Aram says these colds are going around."

"But you might need something in the night."

"Oh no, I won't!"

Abby went over to the dressing table and began to fix her hair.

"Abby, I want to talk to you."

Abby turned around.

RED DAMASK

"No. Let your hair alone. This is important. I have some very bad news."

"Oh, Gilbert, do you have to go away?"

"What's that got to do with it? Abby, I feel as if I had done you a great wrong. If I'd only known. . . . Things hadn't been going so well for a long time, but I thought they'd straighten out. One takes things for granted. It was a terrible surprise to me and yet I should have realized . . ."

"Gilbert, tell me! Don't keep me in suspense!" Holding a heavy silver brush, Abby stood over him.

"Be careful, Abby; don't drop that brush. Oh, Abby, it's the business!" Gilbert sat up. "How can I tell you?" He buried his face in his hands.

Abby knelt down and pressed his head against the apple-green dressing gown. "There! There! Oh, Gilbert, I'm so relieved! I was afraid it was serious. If it's only business, it doesn't matter."

"You'll think it matters"—he pulled away and looked at her defiantly—"when I tell you that we have to liquidate Ware's. Lewis saw Mr. Aldrich at the Flower National this morning. The banks have refused to renew our loans and Mr. Aldrich says we're lucky to get most of our capital out after paying our debts. We ought to have moved uptown when your father did. That's why Lewis wanted to see me before I took that estimate to Bazaine this morning. This is no time for new obligations, God knows! And, Abby, listen. Lewis wants us to go out to Texas and take the El Paso store. It seems he had a talk with Uncle Dan while I was in Europe. Oh, if I'd only known!" He sank back on the cushions.

"Why, Gilbert, this isn't such a calamity!" Abby laughed gently. "You scared me to death. Gilbert, what can matter when we have each other?" She went back to the dressing table.

RED DAMASK

"Ka-choo!" said Gilbert. "Ka-choo!"

"I remember your telling me about that Texas store. I think it would be wonderful to live out there, just you and I together."

Alone in Texas, with no family to hurt or be absorbed by, no servants to consider, was dreamland to Abby; her ideas of poverty as romantic as a shopgirl's dream of wealth.

She sat on a dressing-table bench upholstered in gray flowered velvet. Lights twinkled through tiny crystal lilies twined round the mirror which reflected a pleated gray taffeta wall, lustrous background for Abby's excited topaz eyes, her fluffy burnished hair. As she coiled it at her neck with tortoise-shell pins the great square diamond, her engagement ring, blazed blue fire. But she imaged an Abby in a pink-checked bungalow apron, a smudge of flour on one cheek, rushing to the door of a red brick bungalow with roses growing over it. "Think of it, I've made some rolls," she told a browned, shabby Gilbert, who whispered, "Darling!"

The real Gilbert said, "Abby, I don't know whether you are being a simply wonderful little sport or whether you've gone crazy. You act as if this were a picnic."

"Honestly, I can't see anything terrible about it." (The Abby in a bungalow apron tiptoed to a cheap iron crib.) "Gilbert, I think if you just didn't happen to have a cold, you'd see that it will be sort of fun. Pioneering. Something real."

"It's real, all right. But you needn't think El Paso is wild and romantic. It's more like a small Newark."

"Will Lewis go out there with us?" asked Abby. There was no glamour in a bungalow for three.

"No. He's going out to Chicago with Uncle Dan in the banking business. He likes that and he and Uncle Dan have always hit it off. Abby, you don't know Lewis. He's really doing a fine thing." (And it was a fine thing for Gilbert to talk away

RED DAMASK

from unpleasant facts.) "You know, dear, he's had a . . . er . . . there's a girl he's been living with as man and wife—for several years. Now he's using part of his capital to provide for her. Of course, making a settlement is a sort of custom with the right sort of man when . . ." Gilbert choked off "when he doesn't want trouble." It was hard to tell where caution stopped and sacrifice began.

"And Lewis is going to leave this girl here?"

"Well, I should hope so! You don't think he'd take her along ——"

"Gilbert, will you just fasten that middle hook? I don't want to ring for Marie. It must be very hard on that poor girl." Abby backed up to Gilbert.

He sat up and squinted at the middle hook. "Well, Abby, I give up. Any man who tries to understand a woman! Why do women have such fastenings? I don't see why you don't get Marie to do this, anyway. There! Why, Abby, I thought you were going to leave me on our honeymoon because I had had a few little experiences. And this woman has been living with Lewis for several years without being married to him and you feel sorry for her. She isn't Camille with a cough. She's just a painted peroxide blonde. At least, I imagine she's a blonde. They usually are."

"She might love Lewis, just the same."

"Would you have him marry her? Abby, he's not her first and he won't be her last. I don't understand you . . ."

"I don't, either." Abby laughed as she pinned some French flowers at her belt. "I'm as surprised at myself as you are. But somehow I can't help thinking how terrible it would be not to . . . not to see the man you love any more. Suppose we had to be separated, darling."

"You needn't compare yourself to such a woman."

RED DAMASK

"I don't know. If I weren't married to you I think I'd still . . . want you. I love you so." She bent to kiss him.

He drew away. "Look out, Abby! Ka-choo! I don't want you to catch this cold. And will you ring for Effie? She should bring my dinner here. The dining room is so draughty with that pantry door."

Gilbert and Lewis consulted Abby's father about the business. Emphatically he agreed with their banks. Their expenses were increasing, their sales decreasing. In a disused shopping district they were lucky to be able to liquidate without much loss. Ware's had stayed in Twenty-third street too long.

Father thought the Texas store a splendid opportunity for Gilbert. Its balance sheet was good to see.

But Mother said: "Abby should go out and live in Texas! Philip, how can you think of such a thing? I want my daughter in New York."

"Philip, Gilbert must come into Philip Hahl & Company. No question about it. About it," said Grandfather.

"He hasn't much force," said Father, bluntly.

"Why, Philip!" said Mother. "To criticize Abby's husband ——"

Marriage to a Hahl or a Wendel meant being one of them, beyond criticism, and in Forty-ninth street Father accepted this tradition unthinkingly. But when it spread to Thirty-sixth street his brain functioned. Now he even murmured something about Uncle George and his sons being enough dead wood for one store.

"Nonsense! I won't listen to such talk," said Grandfather. "Gilbert is a fine young man. The way he never went out in the evenings after his father died until he knew his mother had something to do. Szo. You couldn't let your daughter live in

RED DAMASK

Texas, my son. Such a place. Gilbert should buy some of my stock in the store. He has capital. We'll make him a vice-president, and he should have a good salary. Their standard of living mustn't be changed. Mustn't be changed."

"It's your stock," said Father, gloomily.

Grandfather hurried to tell Abby about it the next morning. Always he walked on Fifth Avenue at eleven o'clock, so together they went out into brisk sunless air. Its salty snap reddened Grandfather's chubby cheeks and pinked Abby's slender nose, but both enjoyed it.

"I don't want Gilbert to go into the store!" said Abby. "This is our chance to strike out for ourselves, Grandfather."

Bewildered, Grandfather said, "But, Abby, how could you stand it out there away from all your family?"

"Young people want to try their wings."

"Oh, Abby-la! You don't know what it means to struggle. And the satisfaction of knowing that my early struggles save you children from it. Why, it wouldn't seem worth while if I thought you were being deprived of comforts! Your security is my reward. My reward. . . . How do you do, Mrs. Brockfield? . . . Abby, there's Mrs. Brockfield."

"But, Grandfather, don't you see? We want that reward, too, for our children and our grandchildren. We want to feel that our struggles . . ."

"Abby . . . do you mean . . . Oh, Abby dear, I'm so happy! So happy." He gave a little skip of joy.

They waited at the Forty-second Street crossing and Abby thought how wonderful it was to get happiness, even ecstasy, from every marriage, every birth, every anniversary in family life. She wanted children for their own sakes, with none of Grandfather's mystic satisfaction in building up a home. Of the

RED DAMASK

younger generation, curiously, only Rose Hahl, the frivolous one, had it. In their big house on Fifth Avenue she and Henry Kenheim observed both families' traditions.

"No, Grandfather," said Abby as they went on, "I haven't any news for you yet. I hope—some day."

He sighed.

"How do you do, Mr. Kenheim? . . . Abby. Speak to Mr. Kenheim, Abby. He doesn't look so well since he had the grippe. The grippe."

Grandfather sighed again.

Poor Grandfather! Few of his friends were left now. Old Mr. Brockfield died last week, and they had played skat together for forty years. And how many of the younger generation had disappointed him! Karl's not going into the business; Marina's spinsterhood; William's illness. Instead, his own children all had gratified him. But had they? Didn't you take the older generation for granted? How about Uncle George's stupidity, which Grandfather never would admit? Outside concrete facts, he never saw what he didn't want to see. But he had kept the family unity intact and he had created Philip Hahl & Company.

They reached it now, a white stone edifice, a great tall box, its windows in that gray light like clear blue steel, filled with things that people need and things they want; a monument to activity, alive with people buying and selling, an entity so certain of its past clear record, so sure of its present vigor, that it needed no inscription, one of three stores in New York that, arrogantly, bore no name.

Abby's throat swelled with a queer pride.

"That's your heritage," said Grandfather, a little solemnly.

"And Ware's was Gilbert's heritage," thought Abby, and once it, too, was a live entity, a smaller, brownstone box, equally active.

RED DAMASK

And this the age of machinery? Notwithstanding electricity, men must press buttons, the right button, at the right time. Notwithstanding organization, one man or two must give vitality to these boxes, or they become mere hollow shells. Ware's was to be a loft for cotton goods now, empty of life, sure to be torn down for something new.

Grandfather marched Abby up to a window full of pink and white bassinets. After all, Abby had been married only three months and he was an optimist.

"Aren't they fine bassinets, eh, Abby? My dear, you should think of your children. Of the future. Such a place, Texas, to bring up children! Away from all the advantages you've had."

"They might have some advantages I haven't had," said Abby, somberly.

"Abby! Such talk! Your dear parents have made every sacrifice for their children. Your father works to give his family every comfort, and your mother thinks only of her home. Not like these modern women with ideas. But, Abby, we must leave the decision to your husband." Grandfather didn't have to be an optimist to know how Gilbert would decide. "Look at that crowd going into the bargain basement, Abby. I advised against the bargain basement, but your father insisted. He knew best." Grandfather was proud to have his son know best. "Suppose we go and pay your father a visit."

A cocky little figure in his high silk hat and Prince Albert coat, a sweetly happy little man, he strode through the store with Abby on his arm. Nor would he see that Father, closeted with balance sheets, wasn't glad to greet them.

That evening from the first stair landing Gilbert crowed: "Abby! Where are you? I've got some wonderful news!"

RED DAMASK

"Here," she answered, flatly, from the library, where she was reading about love and marriage in a book by Ellen Key.

Gilbert blew his nose cheerily and sat not too near her. "Maybe your grandfather has told you—about the fine offer he made me."

Abby closed her book. "Yes, Gilbert. Let's not do it! It would be so wonderful! Just you and I alone. Independent! On our own out in Texas."

"You're not serious!"

"Oh yes, I am! Philip Hahl & Company's built. Don't you want to build something that you can point to and say, 'I did that'? It must give Grandfather a lot of satisfaction . . ."

"You're romantic, my dear. Your father has done more for that store than your grandfather ever did, and neither did it alone. I'm afraid commercial success is a little too fleeting, too dependent on geography and many men's efforts, to get me excited about it. It's just a means of living in an industrial age."

"And there's the Jewish thing, Gilbert. Donna's the only Jew I know who seems like an American. And it's because her people grew up with Harville generations back. Its struggles were their struggles and she's honestly inherited citizenship and can take it for granted. She always says she doesn't identify herself with the whole Jewish race and doesn't feel slighted when you talk about them. But you say Harville's provincial or something, and watch her stiffen. Why, we're locked up in a gilded ghetto here! How can we feel a part of New York? If we go into public affairs the people we work with wouldn't know us socially."

Abby stopped for breath.

"I didn't know you were anxious for Newport."

"You know I'm not! But you hate to be definitely barred. Oh, I don't mean from professional social workers who are after

RED DAMASK

your money, or others who have no social position. But you can't be an outsider when you're a pioneer. When you've helped to build a city, it's your city. Its people are your people and you belong to it. And not only that. That dry climate would be good for your colds. And, oh, Gilbert, we could make so much more of our lives if we had hard decisions to make alone, even if we made mistakes, if we suffered a few deprivations . . ."

"Abby, get an atlas. El Paso is quite a city already. You couldn't pioneer there. But you'd be cut off from everything you care for—music, art, theaters. . . . I don't understand you, Abby."

"I don't understand you! Good Heavens! what's life for? If you aren't doing something, what are you? Our crowd here. They cover their walls with the same silks. Why, there isn't a house we go to, including Sherry's, that hasn't a damask wall! They go to the same dentist and the same grocer and the same concerts. They think alike and act alike and they're scared to death not to talk alike. The men go to jobs their fathers or grandfathers created, and all they do is to sit at desks and let the organizations work. They give money to the Alliance because they'd be talked about if they didn't, and they like to see their names in print. They haven't enough physical courage to go in for sports like the rich Gentiles, and a little too much brains. So they go in for art collections with an expert to help. They wouldn't risk a penny on their own tastes. They wouldn't risk anything!" Abby almost glared at Gilbert.

"What's that got to do with our going to El Paso?" said Gilbert, quietly. "And it isn't quite true. Your grandfather created Philip Hahl & Company, but your father does more than sit at a desk."

"He certainly does!"

RED DAMASK

"You're not very logical, are you? And what's all this about building and doing? I've often heard you say that living up to high ideals and helping others made life worth while!"

"Oh, I'm not so sure about things as I used to be."

Depressed, restless, Abby went to the window and faced a row of back roofs. Northward a penthouse on a tall building looked like a squatting camel in darkness sprayed with yellow light. She used to see it from her bathroom window, one flight higher, in Forty-ninth street, and before it existed she remembered looking out after reading Emerson, and vowing to "hitch her wagon to a star." Now the electric lights snuffed out the stars. No, they didn't. That sounded nice and Maeterlinckian, but you could see stars when clouds didn't hide them. What was her wagon, and where the star, symbolically? Character and ideals? But what was character and where ideals? Oh, she was getting tangled up in words again. The fact was that Gilbert wasn't venturesome. She was. That difference seemed to separate them, and she reached for him.

"You don't want to be dependent on my family, Gilbert."

"Dependent! I'm paying for my stock. Come away from that window. Why doesn't Effie draw the curtains? Cold air comes in. Abby, I can earn my way in Philip Hahl & Company. Storekeeping is my business, you know! They decided to stay in Twenty-third street while I was earning a Phi Beta Kappa key at college."

He glared at her. His vanity was hurt. He would show her what he could do at Philip Hahl & Company, the natural solution.

Gilbert had been brought up to value orderly living and art and music and philanthropy and friends who valued them. In Texas life was crude. Men cared only for money-making and local politics and baseball. He'd hate it there and so would Abby. She was romanticizing. Striking out for yourself sounded well

RED DAMASK

in books and plays, but in reality he didn't understand provincial merchandising; he was trained for New York. Abby, his feminine, impractical fairy princess, after all, couldn't understand. Thinking of her as a fairy princess, too romantic to understand reality, soothed his vanity and put her on the remote pedestal where he wanted her to stay. He didn't know nor would he ever know how superior to his energy was hers. He didn't know that her emotional abandon repelled him, who was geared to conventionality. He didn't know that the one time he had forced himself to meet it would be forever associated with the exhaustion and the cold and the bad news that had followed. A complete idealist, comfortably, he could veil unfaced facts with dreams.

Uncomfortably, spasmodically, Abby tore her veil of dreams. Now she argued with herself about Gilbert's cold, unready to face his avoiding her. But she faced his preference for ease and blamed him for it.

"How is your cold?" she asked, not very evenly.

"Better. Well, I guess I'll run up and dress. Evening clothes for the Tannenburgs'. Mrs. Tannenburg says she doesn't think it's right for men to wear dinner coats when ladies are present. I can remember when one wouldn't have thought of it. Times are changing," said Gilbert, cheerfully.

"I'll be up in a minute." Abby opened her book and slammed it shut on words about women being too independent of love. Words! Wasn't everything either right or wrong, anyway? Was Gilbert's decision right or wrong? It was neither. It was merely a matter of wishes and wisdom. Were many things like that? But then you didn't know where you were!

The clock struck seven. There was no time for life's definitions; she must dress; the Tannenburgs' dinner was at eight.

RED DAMASK

Engagements, scheduled weeks ahead, were changed only for serious illness or death or steamer sailings.

Grandfather insisted that Bazaine's work must be his gift. "You'll want to go a little easy for a while, Gilbert. But one should keep up the home. The home," said he.

Chapter Ten

THREE months later, Mother announced Abby's pregnancy, rejoicing that they had not moved to Texas.

Uncle Cyrus Hardenburg said babies had been born there; Texas would have been a fine experience; starting arguments about family solidarity, American provincial life, and New York accoucheurs, in which neither Abby nor Gilbert joined.

Gilbert rarely argued and nothing stirred Abby's new placidity. With no discomfort, her world seemed once removed, under a sun that had no radiance and shadows that did not shade. Nothing mattered.

Elmer and Regina came oack from a European honeymoon to an extravagant suite at the Maitland Hotel, which they left hurriedly, though Abby had asked Grandfather to speak to Mr. Trent about them. The Maitland took Jews as permanent guests only when well recommended. But Mr. Trent asked Regina not to smoke in the palm room (ladies didn't smoke there in 1913). Elmer, furious at Regina for smoking in public, more furious at the manager for asking her not to, said: "I guess I'm paying enough in this hotel to have my wife do anything she damn pleases. Finish your cigarette, Regina." Mr. Trent bowed, and later politely requested their rooms. (The Henley Sparkes of Southampton wanted them, anyway.)

"I hoped that Regina would settle down when she married," sighed Gilbert to Abby. "But I guess her husband's influence isn't the best. He's an irritating fellow. I don't blame Trent.

RED DAMASK

The way Rhone told me our difficulties at the store would make no difference to him! Regina's money was safe, anyway. And now he's going around saying Jews aren't wanted at the Maitland; that that's why he left there."

"Well, what's the difference? They'll be just as comfortable at the Ritz," said Abby.

Gilbert looked at her anxiously.

One evening at Aunt Sophie's, William Wendel (after intelligently discussing the Balkan War with Gilbert while Uncle Elias and Uncle Stanley fought over it) asked Abby and Gilbert to come up to his room, a dark little room with heavy oak furniture and brown-papered walls. An austere portrait of Beethoven faced a series of weird drawings by Beardsley. In the bedside bookshelf were *Jean Christophe*, a life of Wagner, books by Maupassant, Hans Eins Ewers, and the complete works of Poe and Beaudelaire.

"I want to show you something," he whispered.

He pulled down the covers of his bed.

"Look."

They looked.

"There's nothing there," said Abby.

Agony in his face, William turned on her. "You, too! Oh, can't anybody see? I'll tell you there are crumbs in that bed. They were there last night, and Tuesday night. They keep me from sleeping and I can't get them out!"

He beat the spotless sheets with a tennis racket.

"Gilbert, you look. Now just feel. Run the palms of your hands across here."

"There's nothing to feel, William." Gilbert was horrified.

He was horrified at Abby, too. On the way home she calmly said that it was sad the way William's brilliant career had been

RED DAMASK

shattered. He had been terribly nervous for years. They had consulted the best doctors. And after all, he read a lot now and went to concerts except when he had one of his nervous spells.

Such insensibility must come from Abby's condition. Gilbert decided to see the obstetrician to make sure.

But Abby looked well and felt well and Gilbert was busy. He postponed seeing her obstetrician. At Philip Hahl & Company he was busier, and happier, than he had ever been before. And lately he came home to his ideal wife. She took regular exercise and cared for her diet and consulted Effie about the housekeeping, and dabbled dutifully in philanthropic concerns. He loved her tenderly; she loved him biddably. Nothing excited her.

She had no wifely reaction when he complained about going to Aunt Olive's anniversary dinner. "Really, Abby, when a man works hard all day he doesn't want to go out every night. One wants to relax occasionally. And don't you people carry your family celebrations too far? There's an anniversary or a birthday nearly every week."

"I know, Gilbert," she said, "but it's so much trouble to start a row."

Uncle Stanley didn't think so. He was bitter. Nobody wanted his essays, though many fine spirits, also too subtly tuned for an industrial age, drank his wines and borrowed his wife's money. At the end of the year Grandfather made up their deficits, but he lectured them on listening to ideas. The family was offended at not being asked to listen, likewise, despite Aunt Olive's assurance that they'd have nothing in common with Stanley's friends. Then Uncle Stanley answered Grandfather in an essay, "The Props of Prosperity," written with such fire that the

RED DAMASK

Eclectic Monthly accepted it, with such truth that he dared not sign it. Anonymous success was gall.

Gall also was Gilbert's happy face.

"Well, Gilbert, how do you like being a hired man?" he said, maliciously.

Uncle Cyrus Hardenburg's muscles tautened, flabby muscles now, after many years indoors. His black eyes blazed angrily at Uncle Stanley, but Gilbert smiled and said sincerely, "I like it."

"You can be very proud of Gilbert, Abby," said Grandfather. "Philip showed me some figures today that were very gratifying. Very gratifying."

"Has he done well?" asked Abby, innocently.

Gilbert felt the joy of a dream come true. Spurred by wanting to "show Abby," by wanting to prove himself where plainly he wasn't wanted, he had done better than he knew at Philip Hahl & Company. There he had something to struggle for. They gave him the trimming department, their Jonah department, because he couldn't hurt it. And he wanted Abby to hear, as now she was hearing, what he had done with it.

"It's quite a story," said Grandfather, "something for the writer in the family." (Uncle Stanley didn't look eager.) "The trimming department hadn't been doing so well. Changing buyers. Poorly stocked. But Gilbert analyzed it, he tells me, into three parts—style, staples, and useless merchandise to be sold cheap. He picked out some fine fur trimmings and brought that out and advertised it. 'Make your old dresses new.' You ladies know that fur trimming is the fashion now. It sold extremely well. Then Gilbert looked up the manufacturer. Now tell your own story, Gilbert. Your own story." Apple strudel, Grandfather's favorite dessert, was being served.

Gilbert hesitated modestly.

RED DAMASK

"Oh, let's have the rest of this Alger story!" said Uncle Stanley.

"Alger. Aurelia gave Karl some of his books once. I couldn't get him to read them," said Mother.

"I didn't know that Karl was so literary," said Uncle Stanley, subtly.

"Horatio Alger's books may not have been literature, but their principles were never at fault," barked Uncle Cyrus, unaware of how much comfort he got from hating Uncle Stanley. That day he had seen an old engineering comrade, back from Panama, where he would have been had he not stayed with his dear family. He could let himself hate a brother-in-law. Only his muscles winced when his wife echoed, "Their principles were never at fault."

"Come, Gilbert. Let us hear," said Uncle Elias.

"Oh, it occurred to me that fur trimming was a good thing to push, but I wanted to play safe and not get overstocked. So I called on the manufacturer. He has five sons, and the youngest asked me if I knew of an opening—said he felt there was no room for him. We needed extra help and he was glad to come to us. Such a connection meant that we could get as much stock as we wanted at first hand from Hartfeld, the father, just as we wanted it. And Father, here, let us spend some money."

"Five hundred and forty-two dollars," said Father. "And Gilbert turned the stock three times. I predict twice more before the winter is over. I am very much pleased, Gilbert."

Praise was Father's store policy, but the family kept it for the older generation who couldn't be spoiled.

Hence Mother looked uneasy as she took her third helping of apple strudel. "Have you noticed that the *Lucania* is late coming in this week?" she said.

"The *Lucania* is always late. It's an awful boat. It rolls

RED DAMASK

so. *C'est cela! Tant pis.* Those English steamers!" shrugged Aunt Olive, prettily.

Uncle Elias had many celebrated English friends and Aunt Sophie rushed to defend their steamers.

Gilbert hungrily turned to Abby for some proud echo of his praise. She smiled calmly, unresponsive to his triumph.

"By the way, Gilbert," said Father, "come to my office first thing in the morning. I want to talk to you about the fur department on the second floor. It hasn't gone ahead this year."

A wonderful thrill went through Gilbert, a thrill of work done and work to do. Triumph was worth while for its own sake. Women didn't understand business, anyway. He forgot that commercial success was fleeting, dependent on geography and many men's efforts.

Gilbert had found himself.

But the next day he went to see Abby's obstetrician.

"Well, it's a rare prospective father who complains about his wife's being calm and not excitable," laughed the doctor. "That's fine. Why, Mrs. Ware's in great shape!"

Chapter Eleven

ABBY'S daughter was born in September, 1913.

Abby loved its pulling at her breast, a delicious pull, tingling through her nerves as it tugged, so softly, so firmly, so hungrily. She loved having given it life, its needing her, its getting sustenance from her. She felt maternal ecstasy, the glow of dreams fulfilled.

She looked at the downy red head at her side and promised silently that this little Joan must have all she had missed. A career. How wonderful if Jojo would care for art! . . . If not, she might be a musician, a scientist, a lawyer. . . . Once trained, she could have husband and children, too.

Only untrained women were tied to household routine.

The nurse came for the sleeping baby, now fed and content. Abby remembered her old longing for purposeful activity, work that led to something, an aspiration to tie to, greater than oneself. Slack hand muscles tautened on green satin coverlid edged with embroidered linen. Instead of that sleek pleated taffeta wall she saw white paper on a drawing board and chaste, crisp lines coming true. Her throat swelled. Not for years had she made lines come true. Effie could run the house without her; Gilbert would sympathize with higher aims. But she was untrained. Architecture was not to be pottered with; it took all or nothing; and Abby gloried in its quality of allness.

Then, turning suddenly on her own reasoning, she wished that she were trained, established, that she might give it up for Joan, her first high duty now. The miracle of Joan thrilled her,

RED DAMASK

filling her with thankfulness which flowed to an ache for sacrifice. She had visions of snatching Joan from fire or drowning. How gladly she'd die for her!

"I wish we didn't have to have a baby nurse," she told Gilbert. "When this trained nurse goes on Monday, I wish I could take care of Joan. I feel so strong and well again!"

"That wouldn't be fair to Joan. Everybody has these nurses who understand physical care. I was impressed with the one you interviewed last night. Her having been with Rose Kenheim and Elinor Riemann and the Sinclairs . . . you couldn't get better references. Of course you're not serious. What would you do about social duties? If you never got out you'd have nothing to bring to your child—eventually—outside stimulation. Or it would mean your going out and leaving one of the maids with Joan, and if she got sick . . ."

"You're right. I was just wishing aloud. Nana is coming in, Monday."

An expert English nurse, Nana kept children always well and usually happy. Under her flat uniformed breast beat a maternal heart with sympathy for few adults (men didn't want her, and other women had children), with understanding for every child.

"Mrs. Ware, Baby should have a formula," she said. "She's four weeks old now. I had a friend who worked for a lady in Philadelphia and the lady fell from a seven-story window, and they had to put the baby on a bottle suddenly. Yes. Before they could find the right formula the baby starved to death. My friend said you could feel its bones rattle."

(How deftly she diapered Joan!) "I'll get Doctor Hardenburg."

"I always work for a baby specialist, Mrs. Ware." She looked at Abby with hard, accusing eyes. "Mrs. Kenheim had Doctor

RED DAMASK

Giles, and Mrs. Sinclair, my last post—you know who the Sinclairs are. Yes—they . . . had Doctor Clemens. I think he overfeeds, but . . .” She hurried to put Jojo in the crib. Inevitably it took three or four months before she could mention her last baby without tears, and she wasn’t going to let this mother see them. She hated mothers.

With her old intensity, Abby wondered whether Dr. Hardenburg, their family doctor, would be hurt if they had a specialist.

“Of course not,” said Gilbert. “Especially if Rose had Doctor Giles. The precedent has been established. Anyway, we must consider Jojo first, mustn’t we?”

Abby agreed.

And Jojo tugged at her new bottle softly, firmly, hungrily.

Jojo was weaned in April, and instead of living or dying for her, Abby buffed for Nana.

The nursery wasn’t cleaned to suit Nana. The new chambermaid forgot to turn down her bed. Effie didn’t help her up the stoop with the perambulator. Chicken was fricasseed better in England. Effie brought her supper tray at Baby’s bath time. The help’s supper hour must be changed.

Changing Mrs. Ware’s old schedule horrified Effie. “Give Nurse trays from the family meals, then,” said Abby. “Dinner at seven-thirty will be after the baby’s asleep.”

“She’s a servant just like the rest of us,” murmured Effie.

“Everybody’s a servant,” said Abby, nobly. “Mr. Gilbert serves the public at the store, and President Wilson is employed by the people . . .”

“I think that’s Mr. Gilbert’s ring, madam,” said Effie, hurriedly.

With an air of mock secrecy Abby pulled him into the library, shut the door, and kissed him fervently, her old way. “Oh, Gil-

RED DAMASK

bert! Let's grab Jojo and run off to a desert island, away from all these tyrants!"

Gilbert stooped to pick a thread from the rug, unaware that he stooped to dodge Abby's fervor. "We'd starve on a desert island." He laughed, nervously. "Robinson Crusoe had a man Friday."

"I wonder if two men Fridays would have hated each other the way Effie and Nurse . . ."

"Well, that nurse is a tyrant. I don't blame Effie. When I went into the nursery ten minutes late last night, she looked daggers."

"But she is wonderful with Jojo and she's absolutely reliable. George Hahl's wife got a woman from an unknown German agency, and she fed the baby paregoric to keep him quiet. Rose says the good ones are always tyrants."

"I suppose they take it out on the household to even things up," said Gilbert, wisely.

"You even things up," whispered Abby, close to him again.

"By the way, I must let your grandfather know. He isn't using his opera tickets tonight. It's *Tristan*. I said I'd ask you first."

"Let's stay home. You don't care for opera, anyway."

"A man likes recreation after a hard day's work. And not going to theater this winter . . ."

"But, Gilbert, we were at Elinor Riemann's last night, and the Brockfields' the night before! I thought you said you didn't want to go out every night."

"I feel like going out tonight," said Gilbert, his hand on the library door.

Tears, whence she did not know, came to Abby's eyes.

"Why, Abby, you're upset over these servants' squabbles! It'll do you good to get out and forget them."

RED DAMASK

At the opera, Gilbert's imagination comfortably took him into a fairy tale where a noble knight succumbed to love and died for it. Noble knights should die for love in fairy tales and Gilbert enjoyed watching them do it.

Between the acts Abby and Gilbert walked in the foyer, and Gilbert said: "Look at Andrew Conrad, Abby. Doesn't he look terrible? And no wonder, the way he chases around. You can't burn the candle at both ends these days. It isn't worth it."

"Aren't they?" answered Abby, deafly.

The music had hypnotized, enchanted her.

Later, Abby sat at her dressing table, brushing and braiding her hair.

"Let me get your kimono, dear. You'll catch cold with nothing on your shoulders," warned Gilbert.

He wore a black brocade dressing gown over his nightshirt, buttoned high at the neck with braided frogs. Tall, well built, with his straight features and clear gray eyes, Gilbert was pleasing to look at.

So Abby thought.

Suddenly she jumped up and ran into his arms. "Precious! You're heavenly! Heavenly!"

He kissed her forehead and gently, firmly disengaged himself, started to pat her shoulder, patted the top of her head, leaned down and, lifting his pillow, put his watch under it.

"I'm going to do some heavenly sleeping just as soon as I can, Abby dear. I've got a hard day ahead tomorrow."

Gilbert had charge of the fur department now. Playing safe, organizing, he followed the pattern of his first success. His assistant, young Hartfeld, the fur manufacturer's son, in turn chose his assistant, and therefore would see that she made good. Gil-

RED DAMASK

bert didn't care enough for power to be jealous of it, an ideal executive for a business already created. His decisions were judicial, cool. Tomorrow he was going to ask Father to move the fur department to the main floor, with a separate front, a separate entrance of its own. That year the fur department had made \$99,650, figures more potent than his voice ever could be. But Father was jealous of power. Constantly Mother told him that he was getting old, that he must leave things to younger men, arousing a fierce activity more resentful than purposeful as it used to be. He had to be handled with care. Tomorrow's interview was important, its suspense a strain. Gilbert wanted to harbor his strength for it.

But Abby lay awake, listening to his quiet breathing, to the rumble of trucks through the open window, the scream of Madison avenue cars, sounds she was used to—sounds newly inexorable, inhuman, cruel, like the city they voiced, the city that turned men into machines, grinding them into its rhythm. Gilbert was in step with it now, and it had changed him.

She forgot that she had urged him to build and to do. She would not analyze vitality and differing physical needs. It was more spiritual to blame a city vaguely.

Then she thought of the way Effie spoiled Gilbert, getting the cook up at five-thirty to cook and strain his oatmeal every morning, when it could be cooked the day before! This was her house now. Why should the old routine be followed as if it were sacred? Gilbert didn't "blame Effie" for fighting with Nurse, Nurse who took such wonderful care of their darling baby! Effie nursed things, as if things were important. She stood over the useful maid every Friday while she polished silver bathroom mugs. Silver bathroom mugs were absurd, anyway.

Abby decided to buy glass ones tomorrow. How Effie's little

RED DAMASK

eyes would glitter! Her own eyes narrowed in the darkness. Abby half hoped for, half dreaded, their glittering.

The next morning when Abby told Effie to put Mrs. Ware's silver mugs away, her little eyes didn't glitter. They moistened.

"But Mrs. Ware always . . ."

"That will do, Effie," said Abby.

"Yes, madam."

Effie was helpless. But she kept Cook from making apple pie for lunch. Nurse liked apple pie.

On Thursdays, Nana's day off, from two o'clock in the afternoon until ten-thirty at night, Abby took care of Jojo. On Fridays Nana had to deal with the ravages of dissipation, milk that wouldn't digest in an excellent stomach upset by too much handling, rest that wouldn't come to a baby over-tired.

For it was tiring to be diapered by tense, trembling fingers, to be anxiously watched when you settled for sleep, and to have your bottle wiggled. Nana held it still. And Abby couldn't take Jojo for granted. It was miraculous that the tiny pink toes could move, that this little bundle of flesh was alive, a personality, her baby. Being a miracle wasn't restful, either. Then the family liked to call when Nana was out, and though books had warned Abby not to handle Jojo unnecessarily, aunts and cousins had to cuddle her.

Today Aunt Sophie said: "Stuff! I raised five children without textbooks and baby specialists, and they're not such bad specimens! What's the use of having children if you can't love them? Wuddgy, wuddgy, it wants to be cuddle-wuddled, doesn't it, the scudgy, budgy, boo!"

Jojo happily cooed against Aunt Sophie's ample bosom. She

RED DAMASK

was the first visitor. Next came Aunt Olive with an embroidered frock from Paris for "*la petite*."

And Jojo's formula boiled away on the hot plate while Abby, to discourage more cuddling, listened to what Uncle Stanley had told Anatole France, and how *recherché* French writers were.

Then Grandfather opened the door, beaming at Aunt Olive, such a pleasing reflection of his own success.

"How well you're looking, Olive! Let's have the window down, Abby. On a rainy day. Too draughty for an old gentleman. An old gentleman."

This was a daily duel with Nana, who calmly, grimly, won it.

One strand of brown hair from the knot on Abby's neck trickled down her back. Jojo had pulled it. Her lace jabot, spotted with milk, hung from a thread. She had mixed a fresh bottle, accurately following printed directions, but Jojo was fretting because it was late. And babies needed fresh air. Irresolute, mustard-colored eyes roved miserably from infancy to age.

"I'll put the window down," said Aunt Olive. The April air was damp and chilly.

Aunt Olive wore a dark straw hat, sailor-shaped, a small bird of many colors pressed close to its brim. Her hair, changelessly, was drawn back at the sides, Queen Alexandra fashion, and her curly fringe veiled pretty brown eyes that gave Grandfather a dutiful glance as she put white-gloved hands on the window sash. Her severe black suit was faultless, her pearls likewise, and a diamond bar pin glittered where diamond bar pins should glitter.

No wonder Uncle Stanley liked to look at her.

Excited out of all proportion to the situation, willfully deaf to contrasts and inner rebellions against spots on lace jabots and untidy hair, Abby caught the window sash and held it.

"I won't sacrifice my baby's health for anybody."

"Why, Abby! Your grandfather . . ."

RED DAMASK

"Abby is right," said Grandfather. "I will keep my coat on. And, Abby, we'll excuse you if you want to make yourself a little neater. A little neater."

"I was right," murmured Abby to herself in a tumult of emotion struggling with common sense, as she brushed her hair and changed her dress.

Back in the nursery she found Grandfather saying, "Chucky-unner-the-chin-babee! Chucky-unner-the-chin-babee!" which always puckered Jojo's lips. Today she howled.

Aunt Olive left hurriedly. So did Grandfather.

Abby, taking notes, had watched Nana with Jojo. Perhaps she had gas and should be taken up. Abby lifted her jerkily because naturally she moved that way. Jojo, used to gentle calm, didn't like it. Abby put her back in the crib. She liked that less. Against all the rules, Abby took her up and walked the floor with her, but swiftly, because naturally she walked that way. Her muscles, all her nerves were tense, taut with denying her own inadequacy. She was this child's mother. She had studied five authorities on infant care. Nana had had only nine months' training in a babies' hospital, and Dr. Giles said some of his best nurses had none. Surely she was more intelligent than Nana, who sometimes dropped an 'H' and read lurid magazines, and she had mother love! But last Thursday Jojo lost an ounce and a half, and now she kept on howling. Obviously Abby needed more practice in nursery routine.

And here was Mother.

"Oh, Mother! Please! She's seen too many visitors!" shouted Abby, in despair.

"But her own grandmother," Mother was aggrieved. "One gets no pleasure out of babies nowadays. Abby, I expect you for lunch tomorrow. You haven't been at the house for three days."

"All right! All right!"

RED DAMASK

But Mother didn't go.

"Let me take Baby a minute, Abby," she begged almost pitifully.

She took Jojo from muscles too tired to resist, took her with a calm strength that soothed Jojo, crooned over her softly, and, magically, Jojo's mouth closed. Her eyelids drooped. Exhausted, she slept. Slowly, easily, Mother tucked her in her crib.

"I knew I could get her to sleep," she bragged, tactless as usual, with anyone over three.

"Sh-h! Don't wake her! They often fall asleep suddenly like that," said Abby, ungratefully.

Mother left, and Abby, bent for a hot bath, tiptoed to the door and, before she thought, slammed it. Jojo, too tired to cry, stirred, whimpered, dozed restlessly.

And just as Abby turned on the water faucets, Effie knocked.

"May I speak to you, Mrs. Gilbert?"

"Later, Effie," said Abby. ("I'd give ten years of my life for ten minutes' privacy," she thought.)

"But Mr. Gilbert'll be home, and there was company all afternoon, and you with the baby . . ."

Abby flung on a kimono and opened the door. "What is it?"

"It's that new kitchenmaid, madam. She says Cook is making her get up to fix Mr. Gilbert's oatmeal in the mornings. That's Cook's work and she says Cook is imposing on her."

"There's no reason why Mr. Gilbert's oatmeal couldn't be made the day before and strained and heated in the morning. There's no need of anybody getting up at five-thirty."

"But, Mrs. Gilbert! Mr. Gilbert always. . . ."

"That will do, Effie!" Abby glared at her as she hadn't dared to glare at Aunt Sophie or Aunt Olive or Grandfather or Mother, as she wouldn't let herself want to glare at Jojo.

"I could scream," she thought, as the bath water, overhot,

RED DAMASK

stung her feet, a lesser sting than the realization that Mother could soothe Jojo when she couldn't, that Nana understood her best. Abby didn't realize that while she was eager to sacrifice life or career for Jojo, Mother and Nana were willing to sacrifice their time. Secretly, Abby's impatient ardor resented tedium, a resentment nourished by its secrecy, a resentment that fed basic ineptitudes, made of muscular habits and excitable nerves, things with which Abby's ideal of motherhood would have nothing to do, things vital to the real job.

So Effie was the comforting brick she picked to hurl at the cosmos. "She's always bothering about something that doesn't really matter," she grumbled to herself. Would she never escape this horrid importance of trifles? And tomorrow she had to lunch with Mother instead of at the Women's Civic Club, where an interesting project would be broached. As soon as Jojo was weaned, she had planned to be more active there; all her friends were. She decided to telephone Mrs. Mark Martin that she would be glad to serve on the Conservation Committee.

At dinner Gilbert was happy. He had carried his point; he had been given a free hand with the fur department.

"Now aren't you glad we didn't go to Texas?"

"Honestly, Gilbert, I'm so tired I don't know what I am. I didn't sleep well last night, and Joan had too many visitors today. But you know I'm proud of you. Grandfather said this afternoon that everything turns out for the best. Karl's doing such wonderful work now. He has a paper in one of the German journals about marasmus in children. I must look up marasmus. And this is news! Karl has been appointed instructor at Adams University here. They may come home for good in the fall! Won't it be wonderful to have Donna back? I only hope Karl

RED DAMASK

doesn't find out that Grandfather managed the appointment through one of the trustees and a friend of Doctor Hardenburg's."

"What's the difference if it's a good man in a good place?"

"Surely, he'd want to get the appointment on his own merits!"

"I'll take some more of that chicken, Effie," said Gilbert. "Oh, by the way, Abby, maybe you can give me some advice along the lines of your old interest. We're going to have a separate front for the fur store, you know. And Philip Hahl & Company's regular architect is in Europe for six months. That gives me a chance to try some new blood. Can you suggest anyone?"

"I certainly can! Mr. Heron, my old teacher. He's not so old at that. And he's awfully gifted. That architect we met at the Kenheims' dinner said any office that hasn't had Matthew Heron is always glad to get him."

"Sounds like a left-handed compliment."

"His ability is well known, all right. He's an associate at Hurley, Webster & Berg's now. But he's temperamental. Very hard to handle, they say."

"I don't mind that." Gilbert strutted a little, walking out of the dining room. "The only way to handle people is to give them their own way. If he's got ability, I'd like to give him a chance to show it."

"He's just like a boy," thought Abby.

And that night he loved Abby quietly, briefly, the way he wanted to love her.

Gilbert loved her best when she was tired.

The Conservation Committee of the Women's Civic Club, needing money for a social experiment, elected Abby chairman. Whereupon Philip Hahl & Company furnished equipment for "The Home Kitchen Plan."

RED DAMASK

The committee expected the Plan to be self-supporting after the first endowment. They expected it to be copied in every flat building in the city, after they had proven, by experiment, that one kitchen to a building could conserve food, ice, coal, and labor for eight families. Food, expertly cooked in small enough quantities to preserve flavors, would be sent in containers to each flat, preserving home atmosphere also. Children would be scientifically fed; overburdened mothers would be relieved. The Plan appealed to a different hobby in each contributor.

Convinced of its practical, permanent aims, Abby visited similar enterprises and consulted home economists. She read reports of community kitchens elsewhere, and wrote careful abstracts. For two weeks she was too busy to be edgy. Effie had every bureau drawer scrubbed with vinegar according to Mrs. Ware's ideas, and Abby didn't notice her. Joan's Thursdays improved because Abby got detached enough to rule against visitors. Gilbert, without argument, got the outside recreation he seemed newly to crave, and Abby found interested supporters at dinner parties. And evenings after special sales, when Gilbert wanted to rest on the library sofa, eyes closed and relaxed, Abby worked quietly at her papers spread on the table near by, concentrating, unaware of him. He liked to glance at her occasionally. How pretty she looked with her pointed chin set and earnest, her eyes bright and absorbed! Her habit of chewing her tongue a little when she forgot herself amused him, and he admired her ability to concentrate. She was a wonderful girl! He glowed with pride in his wife.

Work bigger than herself freed her from family duties. Belief in it sustained her through Mother's pouting and sighing. In ten days Mother was bragging about "Abby's wonderful work."

All was serene at nineteen East Fiftieth street.

RED DAMASK

The committee discussed anything but "The Home Kitchen Plan."

"We have to decide everything, anyway," Mrs. Mark Martin told Abby.

The Plan was Mrs. Martin's idea. She had organized the committee. Whatever happened, she organized a committee. Her name was on dozens of letterheads; her voice was heard at English society dinners, and Mr. Kenheim's birthday celebration, and every uplift meeting at Mrs. Severne Parke's. Her activity was ceaseless, and so was her tact.

Now when Abby worried, "Is it democratic for us to decide everything?" Mrs. Martin expressed beautiful sentiments about democracy, which she renounced unconsciously when she found the painters on strike at West 101st street.

But in a moment she brightened. "It's just as well! Our patrons will have more time to get used to the idea. We can do some educational work with them."

The patrons needed neither time nor education.

"Sure and it's a fine idea," said Mrs. O'Hara and Mrs. Mullin and Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Keane. "And such a nice thing for Mrs. O'Hara's Nellie," said Mrs. McPherson and Mrs. Riley, Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Rourke.

Mrs. O'Hara's Nellie, to remove the "expert from outside stigma," was to assist the domestic scientist. Their own children would deliver the containers.

"And fixing this place up will show them how easily their living quarters can be made attractive!" exulted Abby.

"Mrs. Ware, this experiment has no limits," said Mrs. Martin.

Mrs. Martin had talked and organized, but Abby collected the funds; she studied the subject and handled details. Her energy had put it through.

RED DAMASK

Then the strike blocked her.

"Why shouldn't we paint the place ourselves?" she said to Gilbert.

"Last month we ordered some plate glass for the furniture windows," said Gilbert. "The glaziers were on strike and we had non-union carpenters put it in. Our elevators were being repaired and that work was stopped sympathetically until we had the glass taken out and waited for union men to put it back."

"Why did you give in to them!"

"We needed our elevators. You do your own painting and you'll see. Your patrons are union men, I imagine. Wages averaging a hundred a month? They wouldn't average that if they weren't! You're looking at this thing from a personal angle, Abby. Labor would be terribly exploited if it weren't for unions. Maybe a few exceptional employers would be fair. But it's a very complicated question."

"And very easy to be fair in a store where labor isn't unionized!"

"You are very difficult, sometimes, Abby," sighed Gilbert, leaving the room. Always he left the room when Abby started a quarrel.

Nana's sister died in Chicago, and Abby decided to take care of Joan while Nana went there. The painters still were on strike at the kitchen and this was Abby's opportunity to establish a sweet maternal companionship and to learn nursery routine. Weekly half days were too short for either.

"Oh, darling, I'm worried about you!" whispered Nana when she told Joan good-by.

"Abby, you haven't had any experience with babies, nor any training. Don't you think it would be wiser to get a temporary nurse while Nana's gone?" said Gilbert.

RED DAMASK

"A mother knows how to take care of her own child!"

"Instinctively? You don't really think so, Abby. Of course, if you had to you could learn, but what's the use of experimenting on Joan?"

"That would be difficult to explain to an efficiency engineer," snapped Abby.

She went to the nursery and Nana hurried off. Abby sat by the sleeping child, adoring the pink little face, her irritation sliced away by tenderness as sharp as pain. She was sorry she had snapped at Gilbert; Joan's mother should not act so. Anyway, how could a man understand maternal feeling that now made her want to snatch Joan and bury her face in that soft fragrant neck? "I could eat you up," she thought. "Or I could give my life for you." Her eyes filled with tears of earnestness; she imagined the house catching fire, the stairs first. She saw herself climbing across the roof, holding Joan high in the air, protecting her from the smoke. She lifted her arms above her head, her habitual gesture when alone and strongly moved. But now it joggled Joan's crib, wakening her.

Though it was nine-twenty-five, and nine-thirty was bath time, being roused fretted Joan, and Joan's fretting fretted Abby. "Now be quiet, Joanie dear," she said as she had heard Nana say it. But calm power spoke through Nana's voice, worry through Abby's. And Joan was susceptible to voices.

Abby put the rubber tub in the big one, exactly as she had watched Nana put it. She filled it, and tested the water with a thermometer. She tied a woolly apron over her brown charmeuse, took Joan from her crib and held her over the nursery toilet, as she had watched Nana hold her. But nothing happened.

Effie knocked. "Mrs. Philip Hahl is on the telephone. She says it's important."

RED DAMASK

"Tell her I am with Baby now and will call her as soon as I can."

Joan whimpered.

"Maybe she shouldn't be held there so long," thought Abby. Reaching for a chair, she cuddled Jojo on her lap and slipped off tiny socks, such dear wee socks. Suddenly she felt her thighs get hot, wet, then cold. Joan smiled up at her with round blue eyes like Mother's. You'd think she did it on purpose! She was perfectly trained. That bland knowing baby smile curiously seemed hostile, the baby personality no longer just a part of her. How clammy, how uncomfortable that wetness was, and it would ruin her brown charmeuse! Jojo never did this with Nana. "Naughty girl!" Angrily, Abby started to give her a little shake, and then, aghast at herself, plunged her into the tub. What now? For Jojo, unused to plunging, wriggled, and wailed. Could Abby, without knowing it, have banged her head, that soft place she feared so? Her own wrists touched the water. It was cold. She took Joan out, added hot water, and tested it again.

Joan grunted sadly while Abby dried, powdered, and dressed her, jerkily. Abby ran to heat her bottle, and just as she jabbed a hole in the rubber nipple Mother again called her to the telephone. She propped the bottle against a pillow in the crib and Jojo's lips closed on it eagerly.

"Abby, could you get your chauffeur for me this morning? It's a little showery and Albert has to work on his car," said Mother.

"I don't know whether I can locate Morton or not, now. I told him I wouldn't need him. Is it something important?"

"Well, I have to do something that nobody can do for me. I have to select some new garbage pails."

RED DAMASK

"If Effie can find him, all right, Mother. But I have to get back to Joan." Exasperated, Abby hung up the receiver.

Back in the nursery, she found Joan's bottle empty. Usually it took twenty minutes. Was the child bewitched? Abby felt for spilled milk in the crib, but the covers were dry.

Then the pink face reddened. Tiny features wrinkled. Legs waved in the air. Jojo shrieked, a pain cry this time, clearly.

Could pins be sticking her? Abby felt them. Was her diaper tight? No. But the little body writhed.

What should Abby do? Sick fear weakened her knees. For a second the air in front of her, like transparent jelly, wavered. "Don't cry, darling," she begged, kneeling by the crib. "Mother's here. Mother's here," she babbled. "Yes. Yes. Yes."

Jojo's face was purple now, her shrill voice hoarse.

Effie knocked at the door. "Mrs. Gilbert, Mrs. Max Hardenburg wants you on the telephone."

Abby's panic vanished. "Hang up the receiver, Effie, and cut her off. Call Doctor Giles. Tell him to come right away. Something's the matter with Baby."

Maybe it was appendicitis . . . the way Jojo drew her legs up . . . and to think she had almost shaken her. . . . She'd never forgive herself for that. . . . She ran for a hot-water bottle. . . . oh, Jojo had never cried like this!

Doctor Giles was making hospital rounds, but would come if it were an emergency.

"Tell him, yes, it is, and to hurry, Effie!"

When Doctor Giles came he lifted the baby, put her over his shoulder. She gulped. He took her in the bathroom and brought her back, limp and relaxed. She snuggled against the covers and, miraculously, slept.

"May I see her last bottle, Mrs. Ware?" he asked, very politely. Abby showed it to him. "She took it so quickly."

RED DAMASK

A rectangular little blond man with a soft voice and diffident manner, he never aroused resistances. Mothers and nurses never felt his cudgels until after he left, though he didn't spare them.

"You see, milk can stream through that hole, Mrs. Ware. I'm afraid it's far too big. And your daughter hasn't developed judgment enough to take it slowly when she can get it fast. She'll be all right now. You might keep her on barley water today, though hunger may make her a little fretful."

(Oh, already she was fretful!) "Do you get barley water already mixed?"

"Your nurse will understand how to mix it. Is she here now?"

"She's away for a few days and I'm taking care of Joan."

Doctor Giles took out his prescription pad and wrote minute directions. "Ah! I must get back to the hospital. Let me congratulate you, Mrs. Ware, on your excellent nurse. She's extremely capable."

"Nursing has a technique, like everything else," thought Abby. "If other women can learn it, I can." Determined, she sent for the big medical Holt. With a medical dictionary she studied it, earnestly, intelligently. But Jojo, who slept while Nana read *Tender Tales* with the night light shining through the day-nursery door, stirred while Abby, seated on the threshold, made notes with a passionate pen; or when she felt the little neck to see if it were too hot or too cold. Usually Jojo slept through the night without waking. She was restless now, and when she cried out, Abby waked. Unable to sleep, Abby stayed awake to worry, and was fagged the next day. She worried because Jojo was pale and fretful, losing weight. Gilbert said nothing, but Abby felt his "I told you so." And yet she had mastered nursery routine. She made no mistakes about nipples and baths; she mixed formulas expertly and made cereals smooth.

RED DAMASK

But she couldn't change muscular habits or energy patterns. Jojo was cuddled too fondly, though only at cuddling time, and when she kicked her cereal over Abby almost slapped her. And Abby scorned slapping! But only when Abby was angry could she assert her adulthood. Otherwise she couldn't dominate, because still she smarted from her own dominated childhood, unaware of a dominated infancy that didn't smart, unwilling ever to acknowledge that what was bad at one time could be good at another. So Jojo missed Nana's confident handling, Nana's untiring patience and quiet manner, all little things, together counting much.

Of course she could have survived more, but when Nana came back, the child, waxen pale, was whining and tossing at nine o'clock in the morning when she should have been asleep. The nursery was in order. A glance at the rack of bottles in its kitchenette showed how clean they were, and servants were not allowed to touch them. Cereal simmered on the hot plate. Here was no lack of care, no detail overlooked. Jojo herself was immaculate, suspiciously immaculate, her little nose shiny from soap, her dress not even wrinkled, the sheets evidently just changed. Without that faint odor of soured milk, Nana could have guessed that Jojo hadn't kept her breakfast down.

"She's been regurgitating a lot," said Abby, anxiously, her vanity seeking bitter comfort in the medical term.

"She'll be all right now," said Nana, triumph trailing her reproach. "Yes. And now, Mrs. Ware, I'll just get her to sleep." Her tone suggested Abby's going, but it was kindly. She couldn't hate a mother who hadn't a way with her child.

In her room, Abby sank down on the chaise longue and stared at the taffeta wall, her eyes counting the pleats, unwilling to look inward too far. Her head ached with fatigue. And, oh,

RED DAMASK

where was her dream of maternal companionship? She could pass an examination in that medical Holt, but she lacked Nana's tranquillity. So far went Abby's honesty, before it met a grain of truth in a husk of illusion, the illusion of having failed because she cared too much, mother love being overintense, not wholly false, and very comforting. For Abby's ideal of herself meant more than honesty, anyway. And unconsciously, rancorously (her honesty not going far enough to purge her vanity), she blamed Jojo, her failure's blameless source.

She tried to relax, a vague ache in her chest, too tired to rest.

Effie knocked on the door. "Mrs. Gilbert, you're wanted on the telephone."

"Say I'm resting. Tell them to call up later."

"It's Mrs. Mark Martin. She says to tell you . . ."

Abby sprang from the chaise longue to the bedside telephone.

The strike at the Home Kitchen was over.

She forgot that she was tired.

At breakfast on the first of May, Abby announced that the Home Kitchen would open tomorrow.

"Miss Bleecker doesn't want us to go up there today," she said, ruefully.

Gilbert nodded. "She's right. Better leave things to the experts. Abby, this thing isn't going to occupy you much any more. Why don't you take up your art again? It would be good for you."

"Take up my art," she mimicked. "Art isn't crocheting. I hate amateurishness and how can I do anything with a baby and a household to run?"

Gilbert drew a long breath. "Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you. I've seen quite a lot of your friend . . ."

But Abby, called to the telephone, didn't hear him. And she

RED DAMASK

didn't go back to the dining room because Nana, in a temper, sent for her. Cold tea had gone up on Nana's tray.

"I haven't said anything, Mrs. Ware, but I've always had Pearce's green tea, anyway. But your waitress says your grocer doesn't keep Pearce's green tea. You ladies don't realize what nurses have to put up with, with the help in your houses. Yes. Whenever there's one that's been there a long time they get jealous of the nurse. They're downstairs all together, too, and the nurse has every meal alone."

"Would you like to have your meals downstairs with the help, then?"

"Eat with your help? Mrs. Ware, I wouldn't stay in your house one minute!"

"Dah! Dah!" crowed Jojo, her rosy self again.

"Yes, Joanie. Nana's getting your bottle." Having tested a drop of milk, easily, on her wrist, she gave the bottle to Jojo.

Jojo reached up and grabbed her hair, jerking it hard.

"You raggie-taggle rascal," crooned Nana, patiently loosening the tight little clutch, magically spilling neither milk nor irritation.

"I'll see Effie about your trays," said Abby. "You should have whatever you want."

Nowadays Effie was on the defensive. The cook was hostile because Effie, through ordering for years past, collected cooks' commissions from tradespeople. Now Nurse wanted Pearce's green tea, a brand Netley didn't sell, and Netley gave commissions only when everything was bought there. Scattered marketing reduced Effie's savings.

"In every house it's the same," Effie said, when Abby called her. "The nurses always making trouble, thinking they're better than anybody else. First the tea's too hot, and then it's too cold."

RED DAMASK

"Well, get her some of that green tea she wants. After all, she only has her trays, and she is perfectly wonderful with Jojo. Can't you manage, Effie, so that these things adjust themselves?" said Abby, judiciously and a little absently, Abby who had complained that Effie took too much responsibility.

Through the window came the sudden strains of a hurdy-gurdy:

You're here and I'm here,
And what-t do we-ee care?
Ta-tum, tee-tum, tee-dee. . .

How soft the air was, how sweet! How lovely were those pink and purple hyacinths in that window box across the way! Why did her throat ache so?

You're here, and I'm here,
And what-t do we-ee care?
Tee-tum. . .

Abby rushed to the window. "Go away from here!" she called.

The hurdy-gurdy man looked up, nodded patiently, touched a tattered cap, stopped the crank, strained bent old shoulders, and lifted his machine.

Abby fumbled in her bag for some money to throw him. She fumbled because she couldn't see very well. Her eyes were full of tears. Her heart ached with spring. Her mind ached with servants' squabbles, eternal squabbles about supper trays and brands of tea. Was this life?

That afternoon Abby went shopping in her new spring suit.

When it came from Traill's, Gilbert shook his head with mock solemnity. "It isn't dignified enough for the wife of a prominent merchant. It looks actressy."

RED DAMASK

It was taupe-colored tricot, tightly draped about the hips. Its short jacket opened over a taupe-colored net waist and where the French model had been piped in tiny bands of brown, Abby had them changed to dull Chinese red. Its clinging lines fused with Abby's slender figure, and the small hat, changed from brown to dull red, too, suited her clear skin and brightened tawny eyes. Like a bird's feathers donned to lure a mate, it signaled charmingly.

"It isn't actressy!" said Abby.

"Well, I can't help not liking it. Abby! You're not hurt, are you? Why are you so touchy these days? You wanted me to tell you the truth, didn't you?"

His truth spoiled her pleasure in the suit, but she went to Philip Hahl's for some gloves to match it.

Usually she bought her gloves in Paris and the girls at the glove counter didn't know her.

One girl was saying, "So I sez, how can you charge me such a price, and me with six children to support?"

"Oh, Gladys!"

"Ahem!" said Abby.

"And he says I bet you ain't even married, and I sez . . ."

"Can some one wait on me?" asked Abby heatedly.

"And I sez when I told you I had six children is it a kind thing to ask am I married? I sez . . ."

"Are you here to gossip or to wait on customers?" said Abby, furiously.

"What is it, madam?"

"I want taupe gloves. Elbow length. Size five and three-fourths."

"Sorry, madam. We're out of them. . . . And then he sez . . ."

"You aren't even looking!"

RED DAMASK

"Well, don't you think I know my stock? Honestly, Carrie, some people . . ."

Abby skittered to a floorwalker who knew her. "I'm Mrs. Ware. I want to report that girl for impertinence."

"I'm sorry you've been annoyed, Mrs. Ware. Would you mind telling me, just what . . . Um! Of course we've been a little quiet this afternoon. The girls may have relaxed a little. . . . Um!" soothingly. "I am very sorry this happened. She's one of our best salesgirls. Of course, Mrs. Ware, she does know her stock."

"I see I can't get any satisfaction here! . . . Going up?" All the way to the eighth floor she tapped the pointed bronze slippers at which Gilbert raised his brows.

Often had Abby felt the injustice of these girls' working while she played; often had she burned with a sense of guilt. Now she burned with rage. "Impertinence. The idea!" she thought.

She knocked on Gilbert's door.

"Well, Abby, what a nice surprise! I've got a surprise for you! An old friend of yours. And he's doing a fine thing for us, Abby," Gilbert added, as Abby shook hands with Matthew Heron.

How alive were his blue eyes behind those steel-rimmed spectacles! The sandy hair he always pulled at seemed like wild disorder in that mahogany office with its austere walls of frosted glass. How hard and strong his hand felt!

"Abby, what do you mean by marrying this young man?" he said. "You ought to have found a brutal Bowery bum, young lady! You can't reform Mr. Ware. What are you doing with your spare time?"

"She's doing some social work, but I want her to take up

RED DAMASK

her art," said Gilbert, seriously. "Maybe you can persuade her."

They sat down, Gilbert behind his desk, facing photographs of his mother, and of Abby with Joan.

"Mr. Heron wouldn't want me to play at it," said Abby, "and doing anything professionally is out of the question with a baby and a household to look after."

Gilbert handed Joan's photograph to Matthew Heron. "What do you think of her?"

"Looks very young," said Heron. "Most of them do at that age."

Gilbert flushed.

Heron turned to Abby. "So you're a busy housewife, eh? Well, you always know the worst." And never look it, he thought. His designer's eyes absorbed every line of that taupe drapery, lingering on the pinkish red. It was good. And how deliciously feminine she was, his mind rang out, irrationally. "Abby, what do you think of these plans? Mr. Ware agrees with me that it would be a mistake to do much rebuilding. The store is in-offensive as it is, and we don't want one corner to stick out. That leaves us the windows to play with. My idea is to have them lined with gold leaf—each panel outlined with this frieze in very shallow bas-relief in aluminum on a black ground."

"I think it's awful," flashed Abby. "*Art nouveau*—all those moneybags in the design—and fur neckpieces. Of course the idea of showing the hunting and trapping of animals isn't so bad. That's a sort of attempt at classicism." She pulled her gloves off and flipped the drawings with a scornful finger.

"Abby, you shouldn't . . ." began Gilbert.

Matthew Heron leaned against his leather chair back and drawled: "No, Abby, if you must label everything, call this a frieze for a department-store window. Maybe showing history

RED DAMASK

and use and destiny might be called classicism—anyway, it seems to me that moneybags are as implicit in this design as cherubs used to be on a cathedral. I'll do some cherubs for your infants' department, Mr. Ware. But cabbage leaves! Unless you sell groceries. . . ."

"I never thought you'd go in for futurism." Abby's lip curled.

"Futurism!" Heron leaped to his feet. "My Lord! Abby, if they buried you in a square box, you'd rise up and yell that it wasn't a coffin. Labels. Labels!" He shook a finger at her. Gilbert looked uneasy. Abby glared up at Heron. "There's nothing futuristic about this," he went on. "Those figures are plastic. Nothing out of drawing."

Abby unrolled the sketches and looked at them again. "Those awful moneybags aren't regular, and yet they're a *motif* in the design."

"Those moneybags stick in your craw, don't they? You'd like to think you were living on the proceeds of a Y. M. C. A. As for regularity, sister, are you aware that regularity must be in the eye, not in the object? The columns of the Parthenon are all different. They only look regular."

"I wasn't aware of that."

"Then it's time you got aware." Heron sat down again.

Gilbert came over and patted Abby's shoulder. "Abby, you shouldn't contradict Mr. Heron. He is an architect, my dear, and must know . . ."

Both ignored him. He went back to his desk and began to study the estimate.

"You can't defend this awful metal work. Aluminum! Who ever heard of such a thing?" Abby almost laughed.

"That's a little extra advertisement for the kitchen department. I'm trying to get you a new pearl necklace and you don't appreciate it. This is a metal age, Abby. When we try to express

RED DAMASK

it, instead of repeating others, maybe we'll say something. American architecture is going to lead the world, because it has a new civilization that must speak for itself. It has to. It doesn't have to throw over all the past. But when art springs out of needs, it's art. Not decorative decadence. Art's golden age sprang out of life, too. Not professors' opinions of what used to be. It was spontaneous. Not self-conscious trances for æsthetic weaklings."

"So the futurists say."

Heron raised both hands, clever fingers curved and spread for neck wringing. Gilbert looked up, worriedly measured distances, and relaxed.

"They do not! They float a collection of lines in mid-air without form or substance. They deny everything from the past, deny fundamental laws. Though how can I be sure they haven't something to say? I'm not sure about anything. But don't think, Abby, that I think this design solves the art problems of the present century, or anything like that!"

"Oh, I wouldn't think that of you!"

They leaned forward, both ablaze. Abby felt as if she were running, face in the wind, exhilarated, breath in her throat, intoxicated. She felt as if many months' ragged edges were shaken whole, into harmony.

Flashing amber eyes and flaming sapphire softened; lids crinkled. Both laughed.

"Well, I was getting ready to send for our special policeman to separate you two," said Gilbert. "I don't agree with Abby. I think this is an exceedingly interesting design, and so does my assistant, Mr. Hartfeld. Mr. Hahl likes it, too. It will be talked about. But is it necessary to use real gold leaf, Mr. Heron? These figures amount up . . ."

"To about half the sum that altering the building would have

RED DAMASK

come to. I'll throw up the job before I'll use a substitute. The feeling of the design calls for metal. If you don't like it, that ends it." He reached for the sketches.

This time Abby looked alarmed.

"No, you don't, sir," said Gilbert, quietly. "You are right. Here, I'm going to put these drawings in our safe." He smiled. "I hadn't realized those figures in relation to what it would have been. Mr. Heron, I think this is going to be a great piece of work. I'm proud to have it done for us, and I want it done your way."

Then Abby was proud of Gilbert!

She forgot to report the shopgirl.

When Abby got home she found Elinor Riemann's dinner entered a week too soon on her engagement pad. This meant a series of apologetic arrangements and two disgruntled faces. The cook and the kitchenmaid had to change their evening's plans. Though Effie was on duty, anyway, all three would have resented her cooking a simple meal. The house, filled with specialists, trained to routine, wasn't organized for spontaneity.

Neither was Gilbert.

"How could you have made such a mistake, Abby?" he said.

"I just turned the wrong page and forgot to look at the date. Is it such a calamity to spend one evening quietly at home?"

"When a man works hard all day he likes a little recreation. And we're always home on Thursdays. I'll just phone and see if Rose and Henry are free."

They weren't, nor were Regina and Elmer. He tried to get seats for theater, and couldn't get anything he would take.

When dinner was announced he was still telephoning.

"Shall I ask Effie to bring you a tray?" asked Abby, sweetly.

RED DAMASK

"No. I guess I'll give it up. Run ahead. I'll be there in a second."

Abby, in a new tea gown of yellow chiffon edged with red fox fur, waited for him in the dining room. Why was Gilbert so anxious to go out every evening? Abby wondered, half irritated, half hurt. Where was their old companionship? They had every ideal, every taste, in common. And yet they seemed to be fighting some dark duel which neither understood. Duels. Duels. That brownstone house quivered with them. Effie and the nurse, jealous of each other, stabbing whenever they could. The cook imposing on the kitchenmaid and the kitchenmaid shirking her job. The English chambermaid hating the laundress because she was Irish. Effie hated her when she changed anything. And sometimes Gilbert seemed to hate her, too. Oh, why? Even Grandfather insisted on "Chucky-unner-the-chin-babee," with Jojo, and Jojo always cried. Clashes. Constant clashes. What were they all fighting for? Well, she'd stop. She'd try to fight for happiness and harmony!

That room had harmony, anyway.

Soft velvet curtains covered the windows, mulberry-colored. The walls were paneled with mahogany, unpolished, curiously shadowed, rosy and silver and black. On the old Chippendale sideboard was a silver Viking ship that Grandfather had bought in Norway, and light came from hammered silver candlesticks which had the same flat tan-whiteness.

Abby was glad that Gilbert wore a dinner coat. The straight black cloth, the white shirt front, with his fresh skin and smooth brown hair, fitted in.

"I was just thinking how successful this room is," she said. "We must have the Herons for dinner. I want him to see it. I'm quite proud!"

Gilbert finished his fruit and looked around with sudden dis-

RED DAMASK

pleasure. "I think one gets rather tired of it. It doesn't wear well."

"Why, I thought you couldn't get tired of such simple lines! That's why I like Chippendale. And mulberry is so restful."

"It's too—well, it's too . . . too somber."

Abby didn't answer.

"I wouldn't make that complaint against your tea gown. Where did you get it? You are dressing like a house afire lately. Better take me with you next time."

"I won't get mad. I won't. Maybe he's right," thought Abby, so hard she didn't say anything.

"Your friend Heron is a tempery individual, isn't he?" said Gilbert, as he took some roast lamb.

"Yes, he is, rather. It's been a great handicap in his career."

"He should learn to control himself."

"It's the old story of an artist in an industrial civilization."

"Isn't it a little new? Cellini worked pretty well under orders."

"And his patrons are remembered because of him!" Oh, there she was hitting back, and she didn't want to. "I guess Matthew Heron would have had a temper if he'd been a plumber," she admitted, laughing a little.

The tension slacked.

They talked of Donna's return and wondered how she would fit into the family.

"Abby, do we have to go to your mother's every Sunday evening?"

"I'm afraid so. It means such a lot to Grandfather. I don't see how we can get out of it without hurting them."

"When you marry one Hahl, you marry quite a number."

Rapiers again. Abby glanced across the table. Gilbert's gray eyes looked like granite, unkind. She had never seen them that way. Well, she could say that his marrying Philip Hahl & Com-

RED DAMASK

pany wasn't exactly a calamity for him! No, she wouldn't fight. She didn't answer.

"Ice cream? Abby, you know I don't like to eat ice cream after a salad! You could give a little attention to your own home kitchen. Effie, you should have known better!"

"I told Mrs. Gilbert. But there wasn't time for Cook to make a dessert. And Mrs. Gilbert said to have this sent from the caterer. I told her we never have caterer's ice cream, too."

Abby said nothing, but her face reddened darkly.

Effie gone, she glared at Gilbert. "How dare you speak to me that way before a servant?" Her voice shook.

Now he had his quarrel.

"I . . . Why . . . why . . . Abby . . ."

"If you'd think a little less about your sacred digestion and your precious nose, you as well as the rest of us would be better off," she said.

"Is that so?"

Fingerbowls were brought, and wordlessly were used.

They filed upstairs to the library.

Abby, with *Man and Superman*, sat under a lamp by the window, cutting the pages savagely, too miserable to read.

Gilbert sat under a lamp away from the window, with the latest life of Napoleon open at the first page. He read, "Born at Corsica on the fifteenth of August, 1769," stopped to feel unhappy, and then read it over again. Discord depressed him. He glanced at Abby.

Her book had slipped to the floor. Her shoulders hunched, chin on her hands, she sat staring at the rug, her posture eloquent of woe.

That Gilbert couldn't stand. "Did you know your mother and Napoleon have the same birthday?" he said shyly, hoping to make up without a scene.

RED DAMASK

But Abby didn't answer him. One small tear gathered on her short thick lashes and glittered in the lamplight.

"Abby darling." He went to her. "I'm sorry. I don't know why I've been such a bear this evening."

He didn't know. He wanted to make a good impression at a committee meeting of the Retail Merchants' Association, called for tomorrow morning to consider the return evil. He wanted to play golf at Hillside in the afternoon. An evening with friends meant arriving home late, an excuse for going to sleep early. Like a burnt child he avoided fire without integrating facts about it, carnal facts, painful to ideals. For he was not incapable of kindling to Abby's fire, but he didn't want to burn vitality he preferred to spend elsewhere. And her emotional abandon repelled him, because it conflicted with his caution, embarrassing him, making him self-conscious, violating his dream of a fairy princess, remote on an almost irreproachable throne.

All his protective instincts fought for his caution and his dream.

Later, in bed, Abby crept close. "I love you so much," she whispered.

"Abby, I believe I left that bathroom door open." Gilbert fumbled for the lamp on the night table and pulled the cord. "It'll bang in the wind." He put on his dressing gown and slippers and went to close it.

When he came back he stood irresolute. "I wonder if I'd better take a little soda after that ice cream," he said.

Abby leaped out of bed and into his arms. She kissed him, clinging, clinging tight.

Impulsively he drew back, and in the lamp's shaded creamy light they stared at each other.

RED DAMASK

Abby felt nothing but desire. Her eyes, dilated, drooped. Her face was flushed.

Gilbert only wanted to escape an intensity he would not, could not share.

"How funny you look!" he said, unthinkingly, and laughed, just a little, nervously, through sheer confusion, and gently unclasped her arms from his neck.

They fell slackly to her sides. Time stuttered. It let her watch the net curtains fold in the breeze. She heard an ambulance, and a policeman's whistle, and the Madison Avenue car. Then, as if it could hold back no longer, Gilbert's laugh echoed for her, slowly.

"Don't worry, Gilbert. I'll never look funny again," her voice said.

"Abby, I didn't mean anything. Your feelings aren't hurt! Abby, you mustn't stand there with that window open and no kimono . . ."

Straight and still she stood, so still that her soft nightgown hung straight, like a shroud. She saw a small copy of the Uffizi Madonna on the wall and remembered the day she found it in Florence and how hot the sun was, and how Dudley Kenheim said the child looked like old Mr. Brockfield. She wondered where she felt that sharp pushing pain and tried to locate it.

Gilbert started back to bed, hesitated, and went to Abby, "Sweetheart . . ."

She shrank from him. "I'm tired, Gilbert."

Numb and sickish, Abby clung to the edge of the bed. For several minutes she knew only her numbness and felt sick; and then, exhausted, she almost slept. But a wave of realization, like cold water, wakened her. When she wanted Gilbert, he hadn't

RED DAMASK

wanted her. He said she looked funny. He laughed at her, drew away from her.

Was she unspiritual, then, animal, common, ridiculous, cheap? Had she feelings she shouldn't have?

She had studied physiology. She had seen problem plays and read problem novels. She knew the fact of sex, no more. When Donna had tried to tell her naughty stories, she wouldn't listen. Others never tried. When she married, Mother, blushing, had said to her: "Now be sensible. Whatever your husband asks of you is right."

Neither childish fears nor habits had spoiled her vital normality; nor did dark yearnings curb her. But she wasn't trained to face facts when they were brutal. She might have realized that Gilbert simply wasn't as interested in sex as she was. It meant less to him. It took too much of his energy, energy he preferred to spend elsewhere. She might have realized that she herself had spurred him to extra effort at the store, effort that absorbed his psychic margin, his supply being limited. She might have realized that supplies vary as eyesight does, or muscle. But that would have been brutal when love ought to be dream stuff, when ideals could exalt, when bodies were only bodies, and life a finer thing.

Then, eagerly, she met her own need to do something about anything. Eagerly she decided to have separate beds, or, better, separate rooms. She would strip the paper off Lewis's old walls and paint them lavender, cool blue lavender. Eyes closed, for a second she seemed to float into a fleecy lavender cloud, so cool, so blue, and so eager was she to forget. "You've been dressing like a house afire lately."

And she floated into exaltation, mystical escape. Why think of rooms and colors, an inner voice chanted, when she could

RED DAMASK

serve mankind? Oh, she had blessed opportunities, with energy and wealth and the will to do!

Tomorrow the Home Kitchen opened. Eventually it would spread right standards of living throughout the city. Directly poor Mrs. O'Hara could get to the Park. She said she hadn't been there in eight years. Seven pale Mullins children, properly fed, would glow with health. Delia O'Hara must give them extra cereal. Little Mrs. Keane said she didn't know whether her husband liked his work; they never had time to talk. They'd have time to talk now! And she and all the other tired housewives could have a life of their own, independent of their husbands, and she, Abby, would give it to them!

She was too exalted to sleep.

The next morning she hurried to the Home Kitchen.

It was the third floor, left, and on the way up Abby noticed rims of dirty linoleum under bits of twisted brass on each stair tread. One coughing gas jet didn't light the narrow halls. Through an open door she saw children in ragged petticoats, advertisement calendars on dreary walls, tumbled beds littered with coats and pots and pans.

The Home Kitchen was painted white. Sun beamed through the window, a shining square on blue linoleum floor. Coffee and cereal steamed in bright pans on the stove. And Abby looked through the tidy passageway with its convenient shelves to the children's dining room in front (for wash days), where painted bunnies played on yellow furniture.

"It's lovely, isn't it?" cheered Abby, to Delia O'Hara.

Pretty Delia, posing in a pretty uniform, smiled. "Yes, ma'am, it is lovely, though."

But nobody came. At eight-forty-five, not even the expert, Miss Bleecker, had come.

RED DAMASK

When the seven Mullins filed in, Abby almost hugged them.

"Ant some coffee," said the youngest.

"Me, tea, please, ma'am," said another.

"I have some nice milk for you!" said Abby, brightly.

"Ant coffee," said the youngest.

"We don't like milk, ma'am," the oldest explained.

"But coffee and tea are so bad for you. You'll never be strong healthy grown-ups if you don't drink milk," said Abby.

The seven Mullins edged toward the door.

"Now, wouldn't you like some nice cereal?"

Seven heads shook. "No, ma'am. We don't like cereal," said one.

"Bread and butter?"

The seven Mullins smiled and returned.

Miss Bleecker, still missing, had forgotten to get bread.

Though Abby had told Mrs. Higgins, Mrs. Riley, and Mrs. Rourke how costly it was to run to the corner grocery for things when you needed them, she had to do it. And when she got back she had to run out for more.

It was Saturday morning and the children had slept late, but now they filled the Home Kitchen. They ate loaves of bread and pounds of butter and not a spoonful of cereal. All wanted coffee and none offered a penny for anything.

Little Mrs. Keane, dressed in her Sunday best, came and accepted cereal and coffee. "I've talked it over with me husband," she said. (She had said they had no time to talk.) "And what you be asking me to pay for the children is no saving at all, at all!"

Abby sat down and showed her figures proving that it was saving.

"I don't count that twenty cents. Ah, sure now, that? That's just a nickel occasionally."

RED DAMASK

"And your labor."

"Sure, Mrs. Ware, and whyfor should I be wantin' me labor saved? What should I be doing with meself all the time? Ladies like you has different ideas for the poor. What should I be doing with meself in the park? And thin, I'd be having to get the kids dressed up to come to a nice room like this. Holidays they stay home, in their petticoats, saving washing for me. That's labor saving, Mrs. Ware," she chuckled.

"But if they dressed for breakfast, they could go to the Park and play."

"With thim a-playin' on the streets ivery night till nine or ten and comin' in with hungers such as you'd niver see, and eating me out of house 'n' home, thim children don't want for no playing, ma'am."

A messenger brought a note from the expert Miss Bleecker. She "couldn't manage to get there today. Circumstances had arisen." Not a word about food for the midday meal.

"Experts," muttered Abby.

"Mrs. Ware, we can never cook enough on this range for dinner. You don't know how much our people eat. Why, the Rileys'll eat one whole roast!"

"Delia! Why didn't you tell us this before!"

"I didn't want to be discouraging you ladies, Mrs. Ware."

Tommy Riley peeped in and said his mother said they didn't think they could come for dinner, thank you.

Mrs. Reegan, a tired-looking widow who lived across the hall, had her breakfast, and actually paid for it. She wanted to take two containers to her daughters.

"This is a great thing, ma'am," she said, "but it's the men who won't be standing for it. Mullin on the fourth floor, he said he didn't want his wife to be having so much leisure. Getting into mischief, maybe, and why should they take up

RED DAMASK

with new-fangled notions when his wife's cooking was good enough for him!"

"But you understand!" said Abby, eagerly.

"Sure I understand. But I couldn't be, as you might say, a regular customer. My girls are telephone operators and their hours are that uncertain. Sometimes they work nights, and then again they don't . . ."

She left.

The kitchen was quiet. Two roasts cooked, and vegetables and a pudding. Hours passed.

Abby tidied the children's dining room, to keep from thinking. She ran back to the kitchen. "Oh, Delia, why doesn't anybody come for dinner?"

"The truth is, Mrs. Ware, people up here haven't regular habits for meals. We eat when we're hungry. Why, my brothers and sisters eat their biggest when they come in from playing on the streets at night. That is holidays and summers. School time, it's a little different. But it's mostly snacks we get along on."

"Why didn't you tell us this at first?"

"I didn't want to discourage you."

"But they all said they wanted to try the plan!"

"Yes'm."

"What did they say so for?"

"I don't know'm. I guess maybe they didn't want to argue about it."

"But nobody ought to live so irregularly. Can't they be taught?"

"It's the way they're used to."

Water boiled cheerily on the stove. Warm odors of roasting meat spread.

Abby got the containers from the pantry, great tin cylin-

RED DAMASK

ders with shelves. "They must be just late for dinner. They were late for breakfast," she argued.

But nobody came. The clock ticked louder and louder. Gravies thickened. Vegetables simmered too long. The pudding hardened.

"Mrs. Ware, wouldn't you eat just a bite for yourself?" asked Delia.

"Oh no! I couldn't."

Delia slipped her snack into the front room.

Abby went across the hall and knocked on Mrs. Reagan's door.

"Why didn't you come back for dinner? I thought you understood."

"I had a little ham left in the icebox from yesterday. The girls are gone to work and I have to be a little saving with the pennies, ma'am."

"Won't you come, anyway? It's all getting spoiled."

"I wouldn't be taking charity."

"That's what the others said beforehand. But you're the only one who paid a cent for breakfast. And of course we wanted to put this thing on a practical basis."

Mrs. Reagan looked up the stairs and back at her flat. She was in the midst of cleaning.

"Come across to the dining room. We'll not be interrupted," said Abby, bitterly.

"Mrs. Ware, I hate to be telling you. But I guess it's a kindly deed," said Mrs. Reagan, squeezing herself into one of the children's chairs. "The truth is, the women in the building met at the grocery and decided it wouldn't do. They don't hold nothing against you ladies. Don't think for a minute there's any malice meant. But . . ."

Abby turned away.

RED DAMASK

When Mrs. Martin came she was still crouching on one of the little chairs, staring at the pretty yellow wall.

"It's no use, Mrs. Martin. Oh, let me tell you."

Mrs. Martin's expression didn't change while she told her.

"Now just let's go over this again." Mrs. Martin took a notebook out of her bag. "I want to get it all down. Anarchy of living habits. Interesting point. . . . Mothers prefer being drudges to having time to think. Contented with their lots. . . . Grocery their meeting place for gossip and so forth. True. Communal buying would destroy that. Weird hours of breadwinners. . . . Children's bad food habits. Horror of dressing them to go anywhere but grocery and school. No bookkeeping sense on part of mothers. All said they hated charity and only Mrs. Reagan paid. She's in sympathy with plan but uncertain hours of daughters' work make it impractical for her. . . . Why, Mrs. Ware, we've discovered some important social facts!"

"But they don't want this Home Kitchen. We may as well close it up. They've boycotted us! And doesn't the men's attitude drive you wild?"

"Very interesting. We must get out a report. I think we might recommend year-round schools to regularize habits for the children, anyway. . . ."

"They don't seem to want regularity," said Abby, flatly.

"Children don't want regularity. Um! I've got that down."

"Mrs. Martin, don't you ever get discouraged?"

"No, Mrs. Ware, I never do. When things go wrong, there's always something else. If you can't do one thing, you can work with another. I never allow myself to brood. And when a thing fails you can always get out interesting reports."

"I wish I could feel like that, but I can't. Why, this has shown that you can't even standardize food for eight families! They all have different needs. How could we hope to do any-

RED DAMASK

thing on a big scale, when people don't want to be helped? We might as well close it up."

"Yes. I suppose we could educate them to it gradually. But when you have an organized resistance, it's pretty useless. I know failure when I see it. Mrs. Ware, we could use this furniture in a settlement I'm interested in. Would you let us have it?"

Abby looked at her curiously. A round, hard, blond woman, like a solid rubber ball, she hadn't stayed down a moment. Her activity for activity's sake repelled Abby, who had to embrace a cause.

She patted Abby's shoulder. "Mrs. Ware, my advice to you is to go to a nice cheerful musical comedy tonight. Forget all about it. And then tomorrow you'll feel better."

"You know what I feel like?" Unused to talking figuratively, Abby thought slowly. "I feel like an elevator without a shaft!"

When Gilbert was understanding and tactful about the Home Kitchen, Abby wondered why she wanted to say, "Oh, let me alone!" why anything he did or said annoyed her. She told herself how fine he was, how considerate. She wouldn't remember his saying, "How funny you look," or its implications. Pushed below the surface of her mind, it poisoned and grew.

But she remembered old dreams, old ideals. As if pictured on stage curtains in turn, they appeared. A princess chained in a tower, the rescuing knight's stainless shield, his champing charger. (What was she now that Gilbert's stains seemed only sordid and silly and dim? And Gilbert would change a champing charger for a safer horse that didn't champ!) Purity, nobility. Those golden words on scarlet banners. Bitterness blurred them.

Next came that bungalow covered with rose vines, an Abby meeting her husband at the door, inspiring him; helping her children through difficulties, sharing their joys. In reality a

RED DAMASK

waitress met Gilbert at the door, and he didn't need inspiration. Recently he had averted a garment strike, the one mediator who was reasonable, willing to listen. From all sides she heard how his fairness won coöperation at the store, how his hospitality to new ideas brought them. He didn't have to create! And she had helped Jojo into difficulties, not out of them. However her reasoning wriggled, she couldn't deny that Jojo thrived with Nana; she suffered with a mother's care.

Then where did Abby belong? Who needed her? She saw two tattered visions now, their pictures faded faint. A white-garbed Abby scattering gold. (The family's favorite, a new torn Abby, sneered. Smugly they saw it still. It justified their comforts.) But the other picture showed a weeping Abby, bandaging a cut on a little ragged child. She didn't know how to bandage cuts. In fact, the child would hit her: "Lemme alone!" Oh, she hated the family for teaching her that "helping others" was your first high duty, something you could hold to, no matter what failed. Others didn't want to be helped.

Having guideposts recede when you needed them made you doubly lost. If she hadn't counted on them, she might have found her own way.

"Well, Abby, one failure only means on to something else," said Grandfather, like Mrs. Martin, repellently bound for activity for activity's sake.

Moreover, Abby had staked too much on the Home Kitchen to take its collapse philosophically, and, uncertain of everything, she had nothing to take to anybody. Everything seemed futile.

Work. Art. The world, filled with architects, wanted no more. Anyway, she was untrained. Somebody had to settle Nana's quarrels, to decide who should clean the telephone closet and when to get a plumber. Gnat parades. She had hitched her wagon to a star; gnats blocked it. Inspire husband, children,

RED DAMASK

help mankind? No. She was just a gnat's traffic policeman. She had nothing else to look forward to.

There were no more pictures ahead. The old ones queerly receded. She knew them for stage trappings now. And her past life, her dreams, her ideals receded, too, into some dim past where an Abby had lived, a different personality, now dead.

She stopped analyzing.

Whenever she had time she sat alone on a bench in Central Park, staring at a tree she did not see, her mind filled with feelings that had no images. Sometimes tears wet her lashes when she didn't know she was crying nor why she should cry. Sometimes her fists clenched, as if to fight she knew not what.

Nursemaids passed and envied her. "Why should she be sitting there, all dressed up, with nothing to do? Why should she have everything and us nothing?"

From small red hat to pointed shoes, she was a reflection of luxury, of costly things cared for. Her high collar, expertly boned to meet the burnished knot of back hair, was circled with her pearls, perfectly matched, a fortune in strung iridescence. The pretty taupe suit, finished finely, fitted as a bird's feathers fit a bird.

And once she sat there sunk in sheer misery that turned to lethargy and buried time. The sun reddened, flared, and vanished; trees went black against gray air. White lights mocked a paler moon before Abby stirred, and dragged herself home.

Gilbert met her in the hall. "Abby! I was worried to death. I was just getting ready to phone the police. Where have you been?"

"What difference does it make where I've been? Can't I have any freedom?"

And she wasn't sorry afterward.

RED DAMASK

She took Lewis's old room in the summer home at Leitha Beach.

"Separate rooms? I don't like these modern ideas. I don't like them, Abby," said Grandfather.

Often Gilbert sighed, "You used to be so affectionate, Abby," for when he came home she no longer ran to greet him in the hall.

And her second pregnancy brought neither placidity nor pain.

But Grandfather caroled: "I might have known my Abby-la was all right. Now I hope dear Donna will have some news when they come home this autumn. Their sweet little Lottie is two years old now. And I want to see Karl's son. Karl's son."

Chapter Twelve

BEFORE she went to the country Abby persuaded the Rhones to have Matthew Heron plan their new house.

She could persuade them to do anything except keep the peace. She couldn't persuade them to be anything. Both admired her. She took an interest in Regina, and Regina gratefully tried to read Galsworthy's novels because Abby liked them, and eulogized President Wilson because Abby did. Such homage was pleasant, though Abby always regretted Regina's lack of standards. It was a sad lack, for Regina was stupid, as impotent morally as Abby's mother, who luckily followed every herd formula and avoided Regina's petty, graceless sinning, sinning that often involved others, though rarely on a plane to cause much harm. She was as trivial as a doll on a music box. Unwilling ever to take inborn trivialities into account, Abby looked for a soul in sawdust and was disappointed. She was disappointed also when Elmer went back to his old familiarities and whispered jokes relating to digestive processes, after she persuaded him to vote for woman suffrage. She thought she had reformed him.

But Elmer couldn't change, not even for a Hahl, a Wendel, and a Ware.

All he wanted was more money and a place in the best Jewish society. Regina wanted to dress well and be the life of the party. She didn't care who made up the party and Elmer did. With no sympathy for his social aims, no understanding of what they meant to him, she laughed when he fawned on her old friends.

RED DAMASK

He was elected to the Concorde Club (it had grown less exclusive) and he played cards there, evenings. Regina complained of being left alone, and he said he needed recreation. Whereupon she invited some crowned heads of Israel to a theater party and didn't tell Elmer until he got home from the club. Furious, he said decent women didn't go out without their husbands. She said he was mad because he'd missed a party with the Henry Kenheims.

He caught hold of her wrists. "I won't stand for such goings-on, and the sooner you realize it the better!"

For once, Regina didn't answer back. She was too miserable. Now she knew (she couldn't help knowing) that his beautiful mouth was cruel. He had no consideration for her, nor for anyone but himself. (In fact, she had none for him. Their physical attraction had lasted only six months. Neither had restraints. Both were superficial.) This was one of the least of their quarrels, but suddenly Regina realized that never in her life had she been first with anyone. Gilbert had been her mother's favorite, Lewis her father's, and now her own baby loved his nurse best. Regina discharged her and in four weeks he adored the new one. But she wouldn't nurse him herself, unwilling to pay for her wishes.

Elmer wasn't happy, either. His wife didn't share his aims, wouldn't build up a position with him. She laughed at what he held sacred. She could ignore little differences that sprang from different breeding. He resented them. And he missed the usual male weapon. He couldn't deprive her of buying things. She had her own money.

Now he wanted a country house in Caraway County near the Hillside Country Club, where he wanted to be a member. Regina wanted it in Long Island near the sea because she liked the sea. They argued and wrangled until Elmer bought an inland site.

Matthew Heron designed an Italian Renaissance house for

RED DAMASK

them, a long plain mass on the side of a hill, with a formal garden and a terrace. "I've put all the noise in the garden," he said, when he showed them the plans.

"It's elegant," said Elmer. "When Mr. Kenheim entertained the Jewish Alliance Committee I noticed he had a garden like that. Maybe that's where you got the idea."

"Formal gardens were not invented for Mr. Kenheim," said Heron, dryly.

"I want Abby to see it before I say anything. She knows so much about architecture," said Regina.

"Abby'll like that," Heron promised. "It meets all her standards."

"I don't like things too conventional," said Regina, dubiously.

Elmer was pleased with these plans. So was she. But he had gone ahead and bought the land without telling her. She had to get even. She saw a picture of hanging gardens and a swimming pool on the roof of a country house, and Elmer was afraid of the water.

She telephoned Heron. "I want a swimming pool and hanging gardens on our roof."

"The devil you do! Well, you can't have them." He hung up the receiver.

He had his conception of their house. The thought of changing it enraged him.

Then Matthew Heron went home to his wife.

Lucia Heron was beautiful. Her straight blond hair was like gilded silver; her eyes, a flat dark brown, were darkly lashed in contrast to blond opalescent skin. Women always wondered why their husbands didn't admire her. Poverty didn't prevent her dressing exquisitely, but she wore the kind of clothes that women liked, with details they could appreciate. While her

RED DAMASK

voice was low and musical, it was difficult to understand. Its tones scattered, scattering attention.

Matthew Heron had been her only suitor. And he had been hypnotized by her beauty when she visited his sister from college, Lucia having gone to college to get away from home. There her father was a grocer and her mother a Catholic, and they lived on the wrong side of the railroad tracks in Elsboro, Kentucky. Society ignored them. In Fergusson, Ohio, Matthew Heron's grandfather was a judge and his father a college professor.

Lucia was ambitious and efficient and lazy.

Today, at six-thirty, Heron found her asleep on the sofa with cotton stuffed in her lovely ears. The two children whispered quietly in the hall.

"Don't let me disturb you!" said he.

Lucia awoke good-humoredly.

It was the maid's night out. The children were trained to be helpful. They went into the kitchen with Lucia, and in twenty minutes spaghetti and chicken salad and jelly sandwiches were on the table, deliciously cooked, daintily served.

John was thirteen, Matty eleven. And at nine-thirty they went to bed without murmurs. They obeyed Lucia cheerfully, her domination worrying Heron more than it worried them.

"Can't we move into a better apartment, Mike?" she asked him. "I hate this neighborhood! Columbus Avenue! Ugh! And with the Philip Hahl job and now this Rhone place . . ."

Heron had relaxed in a charming rosewood chair which Lucia had found in the country near Elsboro. She had taste, and a gift with rooms. This living room in their tiny flat with its nice old furniture and bits of copper and a gay rag rug was more than pleasing.

Heron walked over to the mantelpiece, kicked at a gas log, turned and faced her. "Maybe there ain't going to be no Rhone

RED DAMASK

place as far as I'm concerned. That little marionette wants hanging gardens and a swimming pool on the roof, now. I guess she wants to play Semiramis to the neighbors."

Lucia Heron laughed appreciatively. Always she laughed with him appreciatively. It was their enduring tie.

He strode up and down the rag rug, his sandy hair rumpled, his blue eyes ablaze. "I'll be everlastingly damned before I'll do it, Lucia. Can't you visualize it? Can't you?"

Lucia didn't answer.

He lit a pipe, smoked it furiously, bit down on the stem, broke it and cursed.

Lucia cut the buttonholes in a shirt she was making for John. She never argued. It took too much energy and people didn't seem to listen to her, anyway. Every move she made was useful. She went on sewing while she waited for Mike's rage to burn away.

Finally he sank back in his chair, tired.

"Well, I guess I've played the fool again. I'll do the house for them, a different scheme, with all the noise on the roof. It can be done. And after all, it's their house. And those tonsils of Matty's must come out. I'll keep the grounds very plain. Easy rolling country, anyway. And build up the roof. It won't be bad. . . ."

Wisely silent, Lucia folded her sewing and put it away.

"I suppose your Abby will be building a country house some day," she said. "It makes me furious to see how rich those Jews are! Did you notice her pearls the other night? And we have to struggle for every little thing."

"If they weren't Jews, my dear, you wouldn't be seeing how rich they are. Gentiles on the same economic scale don't invite unknown architects to dinner. Their circles are closed tight."

RED DAMASK

"There's nothing tight about Abby's circle! I'll have to get a date book to keep track of their invitations."

"I notice you accept them. I'll go down to the Wares' for the week-end. They're not so damned smug, and I want to talk to Abby about this Rhone business; but after that I'm going on strike."

"You will not! Mike Heron, why do you think I spent last Wednesday evening listening to a discussion of apartment-house superintendents, and would the Riemanns sail on the tenth of July or the fifteenth, and how many days they'd spend in Paris? When there's a perfectly good sofa in this room or a movie down the street! That Mrs. Elias Wendel, Junior, talking about how much people expect of her husband because he's his father's son. And that fat Mrs. Brockfield would like to go to a Broadway cabaret, but it doesn't seem right for Mrs. David Brockfield to be seen in one. I never knew people could take themselves so seriously."

"No? Then you've forgotten Grandfather's seventieth birthday. Remember that letter from Jim Heron's wife? I learned it by heart: 'I thank the Lord that I am a Heron, at least by adoption, and that I have been blessed these many years by the companionship of one of the noblest of the name.' I'll spare you the rest. The Herons put a Presbyterian God in it, that's the only difference. But what do you want to be the little sister to the Jews for, anyway? Because their well-known home life has to be done in houses? And sometimes it's new houses?"

Lucia gurgled. "You guessed it. Your Abby says that pretty Mrs. Henry Kenheim is thinking of building one."

"My Abby?"

"Uh-huh. She's crazy about you. She contradicts you so lovingly."

"Aren't you jealous?"

RED DAMASK

"Not if she gets us commissions. Anyway, she's a regular saint. I guess she's safe enough."

"If you knew more about the lives of the saints, you wouldn't consider her so safe."

"I suppose this is one of your deep remarks. I'm too sleepy to think about it." She yawned, and stretched lovely arms above her head.

Heron watched them appreciatively, and vaguely wondered why his appreciation went no deeper than his eyes.

"I'm tired as the devil myself"—he rubbed his forehead savagely—"but I think I'll try to work out some preliminary sketches for that little pest. I've got a hard day ahead, without this."

"I'll make you some coffee," said Lucia.

That Saturday, at Leitha Beach, Abby gave a dinner for the Herons.

David Brockfield told about a sofa he had bought. He didn't like the angles, and though changing them was against all the rules of interior decorating according to the experts, he was going to have them changed, his way.

"I'm determined," said he.

"He ought to get a Carnegie medal for that," Heron murmured to Abby.

Mrs. Brockfield said she wouldn't go to hear the Lincoln Orchestra. Auffenburg, the conductor, was an immoral man. She finished her crab-flake cocktail and crossed her hands over her stomach. "He shouldn't be encouraged," said she, and misquoted a line from Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee*, which had nothing to do with orchestras or immorality or crab flakes, but she admired Maeterlinck.

Mr. Hermann Bermann said that family life was the foundation of society. Children must be guided. They should benefit

RED DAMASK

from the example of the parents, from their advice and experience. Experience was the best teacher.

"Of what?" asked Heron.

Mrs. Brockfield ate a stalk of celery quickly and opened her mouth in astonishment.

"Of morality," said Mr. Bermann, severely.

Heron looked at him quizzically. "I remember when I was a youngster I played marbles in church one day, with my brother. Father was asleep. My parents were very religious. I lost my marbles, you see, but our children are never taken to church, so how could my experience benefit them?"

Mr. Bermann beamed. "You were punished for doing something your parents would disapprove of! You lost all your marbles."

"Yes," said Heron, "but my brother won them."

"Quibbling, Mr. Heron, quibbling."

"If that pompous party has any children, I hope they end in an unreformed jail," said Heron to Abby, when twilight sleep began to be carefully discussed.

"He's been minister to Rome," said Abby.

"He thinks he's minister from heaven." Brought up on sanctity, Heron loathed it.

Gilbert was telling Lucia how he wished that men wore satin knickerbockers and lace ruffles as in olden times. How could there be any romance with the clothes men wore now?

In the drawing-room, the women discussed European trips, servants, and people Lucia didn't know. The men talked stocks and politics with their cigars.

Then Heron came over to Abby.

"Come on out on the porch with me. I want to talk to you."

"Abby, it's damp out there," warned Gilbert. "Should you go out? You should be careful now, you know."

RED DAMASK

Abby didn't answer him.

Gilbert sighed, looked patient, ran upstairs for a coat, rang for her maid to find it, and took it to her.

She put it on the back of her chair.

"You might as well put it on, now that it's here," said Heron, gently.

Over the side porch, the sky was black, cloudless. There was no moon, no stars. The night was so still that stray automobiles snarled, like the sound of a gun. Only the distant rush of a nervous sea foretold a storm. In such silent darkness voices seemed disembodied, unbound by usual constraints.

"I don't know what's the matter with me lately," said Abby. "Gilbert is so thoughtful and I"—she paused—"I've had a big disappointment, but I shouldn't take it out on him. Did you ever feel as if a demon had hold of you?"

"A horny demon with crooked claws. Once on week days and twice on Sundays. Ware told me about your Home Kitchen. You got yours a little rawer than most reformers. . . . That ought to cure you quicker."

"Cure me?" echoed Abby, dully.

"Yes, of trying to show others how to live."

"I was brought up to think that one should try to improve the society—I mean in the sociological sense—of which one is a part."

"Beginning at home, of course," said Heron, imitating Mr. Hermann Bermann's sententious tone.

"Ouch!" said Abby. "Honestly, I'm puzzled. I don't know what to do. You don't think one should lead an absolutely selfish life, do you?"

"I don't know what anybody should do. As long as the state doesn't take over institutions, I guess rich people will have to support them. And as long as they do, the state won't take them

RED DAMASK

over. But until we get a better grade of men in public life perhaps it's just as well. And it makes the philanthropists feel righteous. And that adds to the general *joie de vivre*. As a matter of fact, I think charity does less harm than reform."

"Why?"

"At present, charity seems necessary. Weaklings have to be taken care of, unless you kill 'em, and that Nietzschean idea is all rot. Who should be the executioner? Who knows where hard luck began and weakness ended? But the idea of educating everybody to think alike and eat alike and act alike is just plain silly. What right had you to impose your standards of living on healthy human beings who were functioning without them? Sister, something stringent should be done to you!"

"It was," sighed Abby. "Maybe you're right. It seems as if everything I've ever believed has turned out to be false. If I can only teach my children that acts are worthy regardless of results, if I can only interpret life to them in terms of truth and beauty . . ."

"You won't hurt 'em if they're turnips. If they've got minds they'll end up in one of our best sanitariums. . . ."

"I don't understand you!"

"You never have. Why, Abby, you'll never get anything out of life nor give it anything until you learn that acts exist chiefly in results. If I muddle a lump of clay when I meant to beat 'The Thinker,' it's still a muddle, isn't it? And where is truth and what is beauty? They're will-o'-the-wisps to lead you into bogs with dreams in your head and mud in your shoes! Life's living. And each act has to stew in its own juice, in its own time, in its own place." His fervor came from fighting his own dogmatic training, from the misery of believing what he could not think. "Why, fifteen years ago you and I would have been talked about for being alone on this dark porch. Now, in India

RED DAMASK

we'd be put to death. But your husband only hopes you won't catch cold, and my wife is glad I'm not in there to lose my temper with those pearl-studded Pharisees. I don't mean to be ungracious, Abby, but why the procession?"

"Oh, I don't know!" shuffled Abby, who hated shuffling. But she couldn't tell him how his wife had said that struggling architects should meet people of means; that some men had to be helped in spite of themselves! "Why are people taught to believe in standards and ideals, then?" she asked.

"Most people need 'em. Mighty few can think for themselves, and morons amok are dangerous. So are exceptional people in a rut. Why, Abby, if you threw all your rules away you wouldn't murder anybody. If you could get away with it, you wouldn't feel comfortable doing it, because you've got a perfectly normal sympathetic imagination. You wouldn't steal, either. You'd know it wouldn't be feasible in the long run, and you're socially minded enough to know that disorder would be unlivable for everybody. I think you could live pragmatically without upsetting things. That Mrs. Brockfield in there couldn't. She's too near the ape."

"You mean that if you think you're exceptional, you can do things that others shouldn't?" interrupted Abby, scornfully. "You mean to do things you couldn't recommend to everybody? What kind of a democracy is that?"

"No kind. Listen, do you really believe that men were born free and equal? Put Lucia and Mrs. Brockfield in a mining town without a cent. Lucia would organize a first class restaurant and then sit down and take in the cash. Mrs. Brockfield would be a third-rate prostitute with slow business unless she were the only woman there and drinking was pretty steady. And you? I guess you'd join the Salvation Army. Can you sing, Abby?"

RED DAMASK

Seriously, you've crushed life into tables of stone. Has it worked?"

"It is nice of you to bother about my life," said Abby, slyly, "especially when you're so down on reforming anybody."

"You got me that time," Heron laughed. "But I'll wriggle. Your Irish flat was a going concern, after its fashion. You snap at a good husband and nag your servants. Yes, I saw you glare at that elderly waitress when she forgot to light the cigar burner. The baby's nurse looked worried when you came into the room, and you look worried all the time. You were born with a brain, and it'll play hell if you don't use it. Forget Tennyson and get a philosophy. Study the history of the race. Learn how family traditions came from fears that dead ancestors would rise if the living changed their ways, and how men put arbitrary constructions on chance because they couldn't bear to face the insignificance of their own efforts. . . ."

"Substitute philosophy and history for Tennyson?"

"Help! No! Don't swallow anything whole. Read Voltaire and Santayana . . ."

"And Nietzsche and Schopenhauer?"

"For entertainment, later. But I'd rather see you choking on Tennysonian sentimentality than egotistic, illogical, ultraromantic, brilliant stuff like theirs."

"There's no doubt you're trying to reform me," teased Abby.

"If I am, there must be some special reason," he said in a low voice. For time, thought, and life itself had changed him. Now, willingly, gladly, he knew that Abby fascinated him, a knowledge doubly welcome to the pagan self he wished to be. He didn't know that he wanted to paganize her to strengthen his own views. While rigid puritanism repelled him, crumbling, it aroused his missionary spirit, an ascetic, passionate spirit he tried hard to deny.

RED DAMASK

Abby had no answer. The night was hot and dark and breezeless, very still, too still, for surely he could hear her heart, so loudly was it beating! "I made a fool of myself once with this man," she told herself. "I won't misunderstand him again."

"Didn't you want to talk to me about something special?" she asked, finally.

"Yes, that house of your sister-in-law's. I want you to understand. You saw the plans. You've heard about her hanging gardens? Well, I gave them to her. And now Mr. Rhone won't give up his formal garden below because Mr. Kenheim has one. Abby, you know I can't give them a fussy garden below and another one on the roof!"

"Of course you can't!" she said, warmly.

At midnight a sheet of rain came down. Suddenly it lifted and, as if it gained strength from pause, a mighty storm let loose. Wind sent bricks clattering on the roof from chimney stacks. A French window blew open downstairs, and slammed, shattering noisily.

Matthew Heron waked and got up. The lights were gone, but he felt his way to the closet and found his coat.

"Did gha shut th' windows?" murmured Lucia, sleepily.

"Yep." He opened the door and made for a small sheltered upper balcony he had noticed, opening off the upstairs hall.

"Who's that?" said a startled voice.

"It's me, Ware," laughed Heron. "This storm'll be good! They're fine by the sea."

"Fine! Ugh! I hate them! I just wanted to see if things were all closed, and my candle blew out. I can't find my door. No sense of direction when it's dark."

"Too civilized. I'll find it for you. The-re. What's this?"

It was Effie, in her uniform, carrying two oil lamps.

RED DAMASK

"Take this, Mr. Gilbert, and you go back to bed," she said. "I got the gardener up and he's fixing that window downstairs some way."

"Well, good night, Heron. Say, where are you going?"

The little balcony's glass doors framed a sudden glimpse of jagged fire playing on a frenzied sea. The house shook.

"Outside," said Heron. "Great sight."

Just then Abby, like Marguerite, in a white silk dressing gown with two braids down her back, opened the door.

"Everything's all right, Abby," said Gilbert. "But this man's going out on that balcony."

"Just as safe, and much pleasanter. I love a storm."

"So do I and I've never been in one!" Abby dashed to her closet, got a rough coat, slipped into it, and on to the balcony. Heron followed her.

Instinctively Gilbert cowered in the sudden wild gust, but he started after them. The doors slammed in his face.

Lucia came out of her room to see Effie grab Gilbert by the back of his dressing gown.

"No, Mr. Gilbert. It ain't going to hurt her out there, but you know your colds."

"Effie, let go!"

Lucia giggled.

"No, Mr. Gilbert, not if it means my place I won't. . . . I know what your mother would want. . . ."

Lucia sat down on the hall sofa to laugh.

Gilbert, struggling, shouted, "Abby! Abby!" Bricks rattling on the roof and deafening thunder answered him. Blue light glared, edging black clouds and purple sea, spotlighting Abby and Heron, their heads high, as they faced the wind.

Abby gulped with ecstasy. "Gee! Don't you love it? Oh, feel it in your throat! I could ride the world!"

RED DAMASK

"Nothing like it."

The rhythm of the universe rocked. The sky split, splinters of forked flame flared, yellow, blue, white, and shivered into heaving sea.

Quiet fell; thunder thudded, distant now; the wind sighed, subsided, stopped. Soft rain pattered. The storm was over.

"Better go in and change damp clothes," said Heron.

"Why haven't I done this before?" said Abby as she felt for the doors. "I always thought you mustn't."

"The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence. And now what!"

Lucia, gurgling helplessly, was wiping streaming eyes. Effie waited until the doors were closed, and then released Gilbert and went to see if Abby had locked up.

"Abby, I don't see how you could do such a thing, now." Gilbert reproached her. "Surely, Heron, you should have known better."

"Really, Mr. Ware, I'm sorry you worried. Abby's hardly damp and she'll change right away."

Gilbert followed Abby. He wouldn't speak to her until he began to worry about her, and then he forgot he was angry.

"Feel this coat, Gilbert. It couldn't be dryer."

He felt it. "But you might have been soaked. Or you might have been struck by lightning. Oh, I can't think about it! Abby, don't do things like that. You mean everything in the world to me!"

"Mike, if you ever get that coat wet, it'll shrink," Lucia warned him.

Plans for the Rhone house were deadlocked.

Abby found Regina willing to give up the formal garden that Elmer wanted; Elmer was willing to give up the hanging gardens

RED DAMASK

that Regina wanted. They would compromise by combining the two, but Heron wouldn't.

Regina said: "No, Abby, if I give in on this, Elmer'll be imposing on me all the time. Anyway, I'm crazy about that roof. And I've thought of a dress that'd look stunning up there—a Lucille model—green—that soft crêpy stuff she's using, draped, but very severe—and a stiff little parasol. What do you think about parasols on a roof?"

Elmer said: "That garden with a sundial and those stone benches suits me fine. If your friend is such a great architect he can give us what we want, Abby. That's what he's paid for."

Lucia said nothing.

Young John showed his father the catalogue of a preparatory school his friends were going to; the doctor told him that Matty's tonsils must come out, but first she should be fortified with mountain air.

For two weeks Matthew Heron's artistic integrity fought his paternity.

One hot humid evening he went home to see Matty snuffling, anæmic, white-faced with a cold. John was helping Lucia hem curtains, his face crimson with boyish shame.

"Why shouldn't a boy sew?" Lucia said, mildly, when Heron protested later. "I thought you hated conventional ideas."

"I wouldn't give a damn if he sewed because he wanted to. The boy hated it! But he'll do anything you tell him. If ever a boy needed to go away to school!"

Lucia never defended herself.

She examined John's stitches, folded the curtains, and said: "Well, I reckon we can't manage it, with Matty needing the mountains more, and I don't see how we can manage that. She gets all these colds from her tonsils, but the doctor doesn't want

RED DAMASK

them removed until she's built up a better blood count. Have you finished the paper? Ninety today—I thought it was even hotter."

Tranquilly she dabbed a handkerchief to her broad white forehead, found a fashion article in the newspaper, cut it out to read it comfortably, and stretched, at ease, on the couch.

Heron, cleaning his pipe at the mantelpiece, turned and looked at her. She'd make a nice still life, he thought, with that blond skin and square of newspaper and mass of dark red dress. "Fish with Wafer in Vase," he named it, smiling to himself. All form and color, no inner flame. How different Abby was! Her thin little nose was not straight. Beside Lucia's gilded silver, her brown hair was commonplace. Queerly heart-shaped her face was, and those mustard-colored eyes made you feel sparks in the room. She'd been tuned to concert pitch by that storm. . . . What if lightning had struck those inside, and they'd been left, the two of them? . . . No such luck!

Suddenly he felt hostile toward Abby. He imagined her flash of scorn when she heard what he was going to do. He hadn't formulated his decision about the Rhone house to himself, but he knew that it had to be. And how could she, who always had had money, understand the want of it ruling your life? She could afford to scorn materialism! Sheltered, pampered, pearl-fed. . . .

He knocked his pipe against the hearth.

Damn it! What was the use of being made and trained for doing a job right, and having to muffle it for rich people's whims? . . . What was the use of continually having to sacrifice wishes for bread and butter and tonsils! . . . Gilbert Ware never had to sacrifice anything! Lucky specimen. No imagination, nice taste, no temper, executive ability, no heights, no depths, no capacity for dissatisfaction, a little hypochondria, like David

RED DAMASK

Harum's dog's fleas: "So's he'd know he was a dog." Likable fellow, too, not smug, though he'd had everything handed to him—by a well-trained waitress! Would he, Matthew Heron, change personalities with him if he could? No, he wouldn't. He'd be a damned fool not to, but he wouldn't.

He'd made his mistake in marrying so young. No man without an income ought to marry until he's forty. . . . If he hadn't been a beauty-mad, ignorant, idealistic idiot . . .

Lucia finished her article and closed her eyes.

"Fish in a Red Vase," the vase overturned, *à la* Chase. That red dress was hot-looking. Oh, he saw Lucia's little drama now. Stressing the heat. That's why she had steak and cauliflower and chocolate pudding for supper. "Making Father Realize His Responsibilities." She wouldn't care if he built a house with noise on every level. What was integrity to her? Well, it was just one little luxury he couldn't afford. (And Lucia wouldn't scorn his not affording it.) He felt no hostility toward her, nor any warmth. She simply was a part of him . . . taken for granted . . . like his Adam's apple!

"Lucia, I can't decide whether you're a fish or my Adam's apple."

She opened her eyes, blinked, and laughed musically.

He laughed, too, laughter smothered grimly in an overwhelming sense of futility and waste.

He threw his pipe into a drawer, banged the drawer, and cursed it when it stuck.

He turned on Lucia crossly: "What in hell have you got that hot-looking thing on for, a night like this? There's no use rubbing things in!"

"It's time to take it off now, anyway," she said, gently. She felt gentle and glad. Whenever Mike was cross like that, it meant he'd given in.

RED DAMASK

Three days later Gilbert said, "Well, Abby, Elmer tells me that your friend Heron is going to let them have both gardens."

"I don't believe it!"

Gilbert started to leave the room, hurt, until he remembered Abby's pregnancy. All women were queer at such times, and husbands must be patient. "I am not in the habit of telling you untruths, Abby," he said, with dignity.

"If it is true, I guess he had to do it. How can you judge?" Abby turned on him furiously. "You've never had to struggle for anything! Suppose you had a wife and two children and no income to fall back on. Suppose you had to depend on stupid people's whims for your living. You have no right to judge Matthew Heron!"

"Abby, your face is scarlet. It isn't good for you to get so excited. And what are you landing on me for? I'm not judging Matthew Heron. Judging is your favorite sport, my dear, not mine." He cleared his throat, proud of that neat reply. "I have no doubt that Heron has excellent reasons for what he has done. But the place certainly cannot be a success, and that's a pity. For his future, I mean."

It was a pity. Matty had mountain air and her operation; young John happily went off to boarding school. But the Henry Kenheims said the Rhone house was going to look like a Swiss railway station. They engaged another architect for theirs.

It was October and the Wares' last Sunday at Leitha Beach. Callers filled the afternoon, talking about the war in Europe, but Marina Hardenburg outstayed everybody to lecture Gilbert. She held him accountable for the musical comedy taste of the tired business man; for the rights of property being more important than the rights of human beings; for the materialism of American life and the anti-Semitism thereof.

RED DAMASK

Marina was a spiteful spinster at thirty-two, educated beyond her intelligence. She had been trained to despise frivolity and wealth until they crammed her cosmos. But her life as an assistant history instructor at Beele College for Women personified her father's ideals. Often he told her so. The world, however, was too frivolous, too materialistic to appreciate them. And she remained an assistant instructor because Mrs. Sinclair, promoted in 1912, dressed as Marina, who lived proudly on her salary, couldn't afford to dress, and President Kaye, after all, was a man. He must be anti-Semitic also, or he wouldn't have pushed Miss Webster, notoriously badly dressed, notoriously forgetful of dates Marina always knew, into the professorship she coveted. For Marina, comfortably, used anti-Semitism to explain defeats planted in her own personality. She admired education and high principles. Having acquired them, she was unaware of needing charm and kindness and brains.

Now Abby had outgrown some family glammers. She realized Marina's harshness and marveled at Gilbert's patience with it. She felt a little uneasy because it was getting late to dress for dinner at Mother's, and Mother sulked when you were late. (She hadn't outgrown her fear of Mother's sulking.) Otherwise she was content. The autumnal air was brisk and salty; it was pleasant to sit on that broad porch and watch Gilbert handle Marina without giving in to her, without angering her. He had no "tired business man's" tastes. He was not materialistic, and his viewpoint was liberal without being illogical or extreme. Gilbert was quite a person, she decided, proud of him. (And sorry for Marina, who had no husband—Marina, who from collegiate heights had patronized her.) Then she stopped listening, and stared at the green lawn without seeing it, dreaming about the new baby. She loved Jojo dearly, but Jojo hadn't solved life for her. As soon as she felt this one stirring within her, she knew

RED DAMASK

that it would, a knowledge sprung from her amazing energy, her eternal habit of finding future faiths. It would be a boy, she hoped, and they would have a rare companionship, a perfect understanding. She saw herself walking on that graveled path with him, his sturdy little hand clinging to hers, a dear little voice prattling about school and playmates. . . . A chill breeze blew. Abby shivered. It must be late! She glanced at her wrist watch.

"Well, Abby, I know you're in a hurry for me to go," said Marina, pursing her lips, looking hurt.

Abby murmured uncomfortably.

It was fifteen minutes before Marina went, and as soon as Abby started to dress Nana sent for her to see two ants on a piece of bread "they" had sent up for her supper. There was an argument with Effie. Effie was half dead from two days' packing. Then there was an explanation to Nana which took ten minutes. It was seven-fifteen and Mother dined at seven-forty-five.

Abby visualized the way Mother's mouth drooped when you were late, the way her blue eyes saddened, a visualization that ached like the path of an old pain, though Abby no longer shared Mother's values.

At seven-twenty Rose Hahl Kenheim telephoned to Abby. She was giving an informal dinner next Saturday. Abby said that now, at six months, she showed her pregnancy, and thought she'd better say no. Rose argued. That was foolish, old-fashioned. Abby said she'd let her know.

At seven-thirty Abby had her bath.

She was combing her hair when Gilbert came in. "Abby, you're going to be late."

"Oh, Gilbert! Please! Don't stand there and watch," begged Abby, nervously.

RED DAMASK

"I'll wait downstairs."

The telephone rang. Gilbert answered it.

"Abby," he called, "that was your mother. She wants to know why we aren't there."

Abby jabbed hairpins into her braid, wriggled while her dress was being fastened, grabbed a coat, and dashed for the stairs. She slipped on the first step and fell heavily, all the way down.

The next time Mother telephoned she got no answer.

The third time, Effie told her they were waiting for a doctor.

And that night Abby's little son was born, dead.

Chapter Thirteen

IN November, before Abby regained her strength, she joined a Belgian Relief Committee. Fervid about Belgium, she hated Germany even more than her family, whom she blamed for her accident. And Gilbert's neutrality maddened her. He studied blue books and white books and yellow books and said all were too hysterical to clear a complicated situation.

"I don't see anything complicated about a big boy jumping on a little one. You didn't, either, I remember, about thirteen years ago when a bully jumped on you in the Park. You didn't stop and weigh facts then. You just bled and blubbered!" said Abby, reminiscing cruelly.

She seemed inspired with a demon of cruelty, a demon mothered by physical shock and physical weakness, fathered by that old stab, pushed below the surface of her mind, where it still poisoned and grew, numbing her sympathetic imagination, its vapors springing out in resentment of its source. She had forgotten Gilbert's saying, "How funny you look!" and its deeper implications. Remorselessly, trivially, she made him pay for both. She shrank from his caresses or endured them coldly; she sneered at small triumphs he was proud of; she mocked at his care of his health.

She was cruel to the family, too. She went through their rituals as a sick, disillusioned priest, through habit, might mumble rites. But she told Mother her cook's soufflés were leathery. She blocked Mother's occasional adventure. When Mother started to take her second portion of goose liver and said, "I'm just going

RED DAMASK

to try and see if this really makes me sick. I don't believe it does!" Abby said, "I should think at your age you'd know better. Father, if Mother hasn't enough self-control, why don't you tell Hilda not to pass it to her?"

Mother's light blue eyes saddened. "No, Marta, I guess I'd better say no," she said, bravely. "Her name is Marta," she whispered to Abby.

"Oh, have you changed waitresses again? You don't keep them very long, do you?"

Then Mr. Kenheim, Grandfather's idol, died, and Grandfather extolled the sums he left to charity.

"He's only giving back a fraction of the lot he took away," said Abby. "And I don't suppose any of those little sugar people he crushed will get any of it."

The family told one another that "Abby wasn't herself, just now."

They excused anything but truancy.

Donna's return was another disappointment.

Instead of weeping over Belgium, Donna said that Sherman's march through Georgia was just as bad, that civilized warfare was a contradiction, and that some refugees she had seen in London were like a pack of mules, anyway.

For years Abby had found excuses for Donna. Now she said Donna was pro-German because she had been in Germany when the war broke out and hadn't heard the truth.

"But I'm not pro-German, Abby!" said Donna. "I think they're an arrogant bunch, in the mass. And I hate their philosophy."

"You've got to take a side!"

"In a thunderstorm? What's the use?"

Abby had looked forward to Donna's defying the family. In-

RED DAMASK

stead, she eluded them. When they called, Belfry, Donna's colored maid, said, "Now ain't that a shame! Mis' Donna, she jest stepped out."

They bored Donna, but she wanted them to like her. Dislike depressed her a little, irrespective of its source. She was very amiable at weekly family dinners, unaware that they wanted constant presence more than weekly amiability. She gave her florist a marked calendar to remember birthdays and anniversaries. When Mother complained that East Eightieth Street was "So far from us, Donna! After being separated so long we want to see a lot of you and our dear little Lottie," Donna murmured, "Isn't it a pity?" and Abby, listening, scorned her hypocrisy. When Grandfather said such a small apartment was unsuitable for Philip Hahl's son, Donna said, "Do you really think so?" and kept the apartment which had a roof adapted to Donna's telescope in a district dimly lighted for New York. When Donna mentioned having joined an association for observing variable stars, Mother said, "So?" heavily, and then: "Won't that take you away from your husband in the evenings? Donna, shall I send you the name of my window cleaners? They are excellent people!"

At first, the consistency of Mother's shallows fascinated Donna. She'd say things to make them ripple, exasperating Abby.

"Just wait; they'll draw you in," Abby warned her darkly. "It's a vortex, this family. It'll dash the life out of you. Look what it's done to me." She sank deeply into a chintz-covered chair by the telephone in Donna's room. Abby, who used to spring into a chair, now braced elbows on its arms and pushed herself back. The pretty mustard-colored eyes were dull; her skin, often colorless, looked wan.

She was going with Donna to see Karl's laboratory, and through a misunderstanding had come for her too soon.

RED DAMASK

"You need a tonic or a flirtation or something!" said Donna, briskly. "You've been mighty sick and it takes time to get your strength back. This is the day after Christmas. Why, it hasn't been four months! Lottie's nearly three and this is the first winter I've felt human since she came. Some of us are bum incubators."

"Yes, and if it weren't for their making rituals out of their dinners and acting as if being late were a crime . . . if they didn't own you body and soul . . . I'd have my little son, Donna! Oh, I hate them for that." Abby's voice choked with tears.

Donna began brushing her hair. "Honey, you're being unfair. This family isn't any vortex. It's just a lake of molasses, and if you're sure-footed you needn't fall in!"

"You don't know them yet!" Belittling her malignant force annoyed Abby, absorbing her grief, as Donna hoped it would. (If the family weren't a malignant force, how could Abby blame it for everything?)

"Honey, you'd better learn to wriggle," said Donna. "Grandfather's a sweet old thing, but he's not the best companion for an only child. So when he came on Tuesday, Lottie played a drum, and Bobby Pace, a little boy who lives in this apartment, was visiting her with his harmonica. Wednesday I suggested their having a concert with the Victrola. You know how tender Grandfather's musical ear is! Thursday and Friday he didn't come, and now when he sees me he looks guilty!"

"But those are subterfuges. You either have to give in or have a definite break."

Abby watched Donna get up and go to the closet for her hat and coat, a slow going, her languor vital, comically restrained by a long tight skirt. Though rounded at the bust and hips, Donna's figure was tiny. And her blue serge dress, with its round white collar, her short-vamped French shoes, her direct

RED DAMASK

manner, made her seem childlike, a precocious child, ugly when you noticed her stubby freckled nose, her wide mouth, too wide for such high cheek bones, her eyes too big, too black for that small face. When she charmed you, you didn't notice them, which was one reason why she had an itch to prove that charm.

She turned around. "Abby, don't you know you can get out of lots of unpleasantnesses with subterfuges? Breaks only make more breaks!"

"Isn't it weak to try to get out of unpleasantness?"

"I believe you're studying for a degree in character. Who's giving 'em out?"

Abby didn't answer.

Donna sat on an old mahogany footstool at a dressing table made from a rosewood washstand. "This stool's too low," she murmured. "But it's too much trouble to look for a new one. When I married Karl I thought spending his money'd be lots of fun, but it's even more tedious to shop when you haven't the sport of trying to get something for nothing. It's nice to have money, though. Not to have to worry about the future, and comforts when you're sick, and a good nurse for Lottie, and a five-inch telescope and 'The Golden Bough,' and lobsters for lunch. . . ." She put on a funny little hat with cherries over one ear, stared in the mirror, and then opened a drawer and put a dash of rouge on each round freckled cheek. It made her eyes look brighter. "Rouge would be mighty good for you, Abby. And if you don't use much powder, it doesn't look artificial."

"You're not very deep, are you, Donna?" Abby blurted, harshly.

"Nuh-uh. But the deeps are dangerous."

The telephone rang. Abby picked up the receiver, answered it, and put it down as if it stung. "It's for you, Donna."

The voice was Dudley Kenheim's.

RED DAMASK

"Tomorrow? At five," said Donna, into the phone. "Not the Plaza. Too many people we know there, and I'm not philanthropic enough to give 'em something to talk about. . . . I know a darling place on Fortieth Street, with marvelous pickled pineapple. . . . Oh, aren't you nice! . . . Good-by."

The room seemed to crackle with constraint.

"All ready, Abby? Must I wear gloves? I reckon so, unless I want chapped hands."

"Oh, Donna, are you going out with other men?" asked Abby, pathetically.

"What of it?" Donna had cursed Abby for coming in time to hear that telephone call. Irrationally, she wanted Abby's approval and flouted her standards.

"It isn't right," pleaded Abby.

"It gives me pleasure, and nobody pain. Beyond that I'm not interested."

"Would Karl like it?"

"I don't know. I try not to tell him anything he mightn't like, unless it's necessary. Like having a wart taken off of Lottie's ankle."

"You mean you do things on the sly!"

"You bet! And I'd do a darned sight worse to avoid one of Karl's moods. I never know where they come from. Maybe family traditions rise up and haunt him. I suppose I could vamp him out of them, but I'd just as soon make up to a garbage pail. He gets a depressing aura around him, just like a bad smell. Spreads all over the house. That's what I call serious."

"I don't understand you," said Abby. "Right's right."

"What are principles, between friends?" laughed Donna, and when she laughed like that with her low cheerful gurgle, nothing seemed to matter much.

But Abby's serenities were as short as Donna's worries. This

RED DAMASK

one lasted two blocks. The rest of the way down to Adams Hospital Abby was miserable. Karl ought to know what Donna was doing. His sister ought to tell him. But she couldn't. You had to love Donna. When she said things you hated, the way she said them, the way her lips curved, fascinated you. And Donna was too innocent to realize what Dudley Kenheim would think of a married woman who'd go out with him, alone. Why did Donna seem innocent, always, no matter what she did? Now sitting beside her in the motor, Donna was humming Tipperary under her breath, her eyes watching a quarreling couple in a taxicab with interested amusement, the picture of a good little girl at a play. Abby was miserable as if she were the guilty one!

She was miserable, too, because she was tired. Last night she had slept badly. And, oh, suppose she didn't sleep tonight! She wouldn't take sleeping powders, a weakness which led to worse. Dr. Hardenburg prescribed hot milk and more rest in the daytime. When neither helped, Gilbert wanted her to see another doctor, but she wouldn't be disloyal to her old physician.

In fact, Abby's insomnia, distressing as it was, had advantages. It hurt, but you could think about it, fear it, even talk about it, unlike forgotten hidden stabs that bled in darkness, unlike hidden needs she never faced. In fact, she clung to Dr. Hardenburg because he couldn't cure her. Insomnia was not a humiliating complaint.

But suddenly, in an acid effort to be honest, Abby wondered whether Dudley Kenheim's identity hadn't shocked her as much as Donna's philandering. Surely she was cured of that old infatuation; now she could call it by its name. For years, without a quiver, she had met him at dinner parties; often she had danced with him and wondered why he used to thrill her so. No, she was shocked to learn that Donna, her friend, her sister, a

RED DAMASK

married woman, was going to have tea alone with a man. It was wrong. There was no excuse for it.

Karl's laboratory looked like an old-fashioned kitchen without a stove; old-fashioned because, instead of white paint or tile, the boards around the sink, the tables, the floor, all were black, dull spotted black. Daubs of cotton untidily stopped glass tubes, and small bottles only half filled a rack on a table against the wall. Some copper pans and a queer instrument attached to a small gibbet stood on another. Through the door a dim supply closet suggested a badly stocked pantry and added its jolt to Abby's disappointment, for this was not the shining, glittering crucible she had imagined. Nothing ever was shining or glittering as she thought it would be.

Two young men pottered with a retort at the sink, and Karl, in a swivel chair at a desk in the anteroom, wore a white gown that lived up to Abby's specifications. He nodded absently, found seats for them, and went on talking to a fat man who sat on the edge of his desk, smoking a horrible cigar. They discussed some new work on desensitization to horse serums. Then they turned to detective stories. Karl practically had ignored Donna and Abby, and hadn't introduced the fat man, but when he mentioned Gaboriau, Donna said Gaboriau wrote too well. She wanted her detective stories trashy. Karl didn't care how they were written if they were logical.

Abby's ideal scientist wouldn't want them, any way. A modern Messiah, he would want spiritual inspiration when he wasn't saving mankind. However, Karl never had been her ideal brother; she didn't expect too much of him now.

Nevertheless, when Karl was very tired or particularly sterile he indulged in Messianic notions, though normally he followed his intellectual curiosity cleanly, for its own sake. Unraveling

RED DAMASK

forward into the unknown fascinated him. Not sensationally creative, he was willing to toil on problems that if solved would be merely one link in a chain. Persistence in anaphylaxis had led him into children's work, then almost void of research. But he was himself a problem at Adams University. For no man with his training and without his income could afford to give them full time, and full-time men were rare. And yet, Karl was more interested in his own work than in his students, more interested in the laboratory than in the wards. There, a marked pneumonia that any clinician would know at a glance, he had X-rayed, blood-counted and elaborately analyzed. But his laboratory technique was superb.

Now the fat man left, and Karl turned to Donna, and they smiled at each other, a spontaneous, secret smile.

"Hello, Pup. And Abby. How do you like the laboratory? Isn't it great?"

Actually, he was proud of it.

Donna grinned. "I think Abby would like to see you doing some work."

Karl looked around. One of the young men brought him a tube filled with clear amber fluid. Karl went to a closet and came back with a live guinea pig. On the table was a tiny wooden slab with steel clasps, and there Karl clamped the little mouselike creature, fastening its head and feet, stocks-fashion. Its reddish eyes looked terrified, and pitifully it squealed.

"Karl, how can you!" Horrified, Abby caught his arm.

He glanced up and glared at her. "Abby, if you are a damned fool, try to keep quiet about it, will you?"

He injected the amber-colored fluid into the guinea pig. How it stretched and struggled!

"Now." Karl labeled it, released it, and put it in a cage. "It will be indisposed for a half hour. We'll wait eighteen hours

RED DAMASK

and inject skimmed milk, intravenously. The skin will have to be cut and the vein tied. Then in a little while it may convulse violently and fall over and gasp and die."

"How terrible! Why must you torture animals?" said Abby, indignantly.

Karl motioned to one of the young men. "Can we see the child that blood serum came from? That fluid I gave the guinea pig was taken from an asthmatic child. Here, put these on."

He gave Donna and Abby white gowns and led them into a ward.

White cloth screens inclosed a small bed on which an eight-year-old boy, propped with pillows, struggled with an asthmatic attack. Desperately he pulled bony little shoulders forward, and so bony were they that they stuck out like knobs through that coarse hospital gown. They shook with dry hard coughs, slow, hopeless, monotonous. A deep wheeze almost choked him. Eyes reddened, and water streamed down purplish, sunken cheeks. He gagged terribly and his face turned purpler still. A nurse brought a vapor kettle and then another. Finally the cough loosened. The face, a wizened old man's face, paled, and the child put its head to one side, too weak to whimper, a gesture so pitiful that Abby ran from the room.

Back in the laboratory, Karl said: "Now, Abby, that test on the guinea pig may prove whether the protein in milk got from that child's intestinal tract into the blood stream. We may get a clue and cure the child. Of course we mayn't. But wouldn't you sacrifice the guinea pig to help the child?"

"Oh, it's all unfair!" said Abby.

"Life's often a matter of brutal choices, Abby," said Donna, gravely. "And thus endeth the first lesson. Let's not have another."

"As a matter of fact," said Karl, "this is clearer than usual.

RED DAMASK

Often we use animals without hope of such definite results. But you're too intelligent to need a defense of that! By the way, Abby, you remember John Burns? He came home from Hopkins with me one Christmas."

"Jack Bernstein, you mean."

"What's the difference? We were talking about him when you came. He built up quite a practice down in Duncan, Long Island, and he's just done some good investigation, on my line. He saw his senior give a diphtheritic child antitoxin, and the child died in fifteen minutes, evidently sensitized to horse serum. That happens sometimes, though not often. Some time later he saw a case of diphtheria alone and happened to have only a small quantity of serum with him. He injected it and gave the big dose later, and got no bad reaction, though the family calmly told him that the child had had antitetanus serum, which is horse. The child should have had some anaphylactic symptoms from that previous injection. It might have died. But nothing happened. Burns thought about it. Got one of his flashes and suspected that the small dose had desensitized the child. Checked up with some experiments in his barn, and we hope he's on to something."

"But it was an accident! Due to his carelessness in not having enough serum with him. I don't think he deserves any credit for that!"

"The parents whose children's lives may be saved won't agree with you," said Karl, dryly. "And remember he had the brilliance to take advantage of an accident. A lesser man would have ignored it."

In the car, on the way uptown, Abby was silent.

"Abby, are you still worrying about that guinea pig?" asked Karl.

RED DAMASK

Intuitively Donna knew what Abby was worried about. "No, Karl," she said, quietly. "I think Abby is worried because I am going to tea with Dudley Kenheim tomorrow afternoon."

"Why should that worry Abby?" said Karl naïvely.

"Do you want Donna talked about?" said Abby, furiously. "She doesn't realize what kind of a man Dudley Kenheim is. He isn't taking her out to discuss the war."

"Why should they discuss the war? Donna's always had attentions from men. It's perfectly logical for her to keep on wanting them. Marriage doesn't change a woman psychologically, only biologically. Some Freudians say that polygamy is a sign of inner conflicts and immaturity, but where do they get their standards for inner peace and adulthood?" said Karl, judicially. "Anyway, Donna's polygamy is only tea-deep. Eh, Pup?"

"Really," said Abby, foolishly, unable to think of anything else to say. She wouldn't dream of going out with a man, and Donna and Karl took it as a matter of course. Why should she feel silly for making a fuss when she was right? But was she right? What Karl said sounded reasonable. Could you never be sure of anything? It wasn't right to torture animals, and yet ten guinea pigs should be sacrificed to save that tortured child! She wished she hadn't seen its wizened reddened eyelids, its drawn old-man's mouth. Why shouldn't she see it? Why should she be shielded? Shielded! She felt as if, bare and blind, she were flung into some chaotic wilderness. Where was the orderly Hahl-Wendel world? How stupid, wicked, they had been to dazzle her with tales of a mirage where Jack Bernstein, who violated their every code, never could triumph, where Donna, who had no standards, nor proper bringing up, nor serious attitude toward life, would suffer. Instead, she was serene and Abby suffered. Bewildered, torn, and tired, anxiously she dreaded the night. Of course she wouldn't sleep after all this. She longed

RED DAMASK

to crouch down and cry. But what good would that do? Things would be just the same when she stopped.

What Karl said was reasonable, and he believed it with his mind from the hospital in Twentieth street to Abby's house in Fiftieth street. As soon as they left her there (with her opposition) a distant look lurked in his hazel eyes, dulling their green fire. His long, horselike face drooped, saturnine—the outer sign of moods his family, insensitively, had known and ignored. But Donna felt them, as if they were fetid vapors on raw sensory nerves. Usually they were made of conflicts Karl wouldn't bother about or understand. He would have argued that his family's opinion of wives who went out with other men was narrow, senseless. But he didn't argue. He moped. John Burns's success had nothing to do with his work. It had to do with the Hahl-Wendel tradition of success, which he scorned and often shared unconsciously, it having been drilled into him. Like old sores under cover, family habits of thinking smarted, unrecognized, especially when several were flicked at once or when he was fagged.

Now, unlocking their apartment, angrily he fumbled with the key as if he thought a waitress should open it. And yet, he had agreed that more service didn't compensate for a houseful of peasants forced into unnatural intimacy, snarling at one another; he had agreed that punctilio didn't compensate for privacy. Tonight, in his depression, he groped blindly for somebody to blame for something.

In the living room a small wood fire streaked austere silver-painted walls with light and glimmered on old mahogany; between warm rust-colored curtains it shone on windows that needed washing. Karl strode across the rug, pushed books off one win-

RED DAMASK

dow sill, and wrote an H on the glass with his forefinger, looked at it distastefully, shrugged, and went to the bathroom.

"Oh, go to hell," murmured Donna, sincerely.

She went to the nursery.

Lottie, who looked like a small, prim Tenniel's Alice in Wonderland, with her straight black hair in a widow's peak, was bending over a bright blue doll's bed, her own short skirts at right angles, her body sticking up comically, kangaroo fashion. "I wub my dolly Santa bwought," she crooned, happily. "I wi' I had a weal baby to play wif. I wi' I had a 'ittle budder," she chanted just as Karl appeared.

Donna knew that Lottie's nurse wanted another baby in the house before Lottie outgrew her, and Lottie was suggestible, but not having a son was Karl's favorite sorrow.

He lingered, silent in the doorway, his mood an infectious miasma.

Lottie caught it.

"Now, dearie, kiss Mother and Father good night," caroled her Nana with determined cheer.

"Dun yanta," yelled Lottie, unexpectedly. "Nah. Nah! Nah!!"

Karl looked sardonically at Donna.

"Now, dearie . . ."

"No! No! No-oh-O!"

Karl shrugged and left, his back eloquent of, "So this is the way your child's brought up!"

Nana took Lottie's hand. Lottie made her body limp and fell backward. Obviously unhurt, she shrieked.

"Now, dearie, kiss Mother good night," said Nana, impatiently, her nerves jangled, too.

"Nah!"

RED DAMASK

"Don't worry. You're not very kissable right now," said Donna.

"Don't you yuve Lottie?" came with a startled snuffle.

"Not right now," said Donna. "And I don't," she thought, "though I could have eaten her when she was bending over that bed with her little behind in the air!"

"Go 'way!" shouted Lottie.

"Gone," said Donna, cheerfully.

She wasn't cheerful at dinner.

Karl wouldn't speak, and Donna couldn't eat, though she was hungry.

"Abby looks bad, doesn't she?" she said, conversationally.

Karl raised his eyebrows disagreeably, and stared at a pile of books on the sofa. They dined at a gate-leg table in an alcove of the living room, though their not having a dining room was something Mother couldn't explain to her sisters. Donna's being a Southerner explained the colored couple; her negligence Mother wouldn't admit. When he wasn't in a bad humor Karl admitted it, and smoked pipes in the living room, and lounged on pillows on the floor, orgies he'd never been allowed to enjoy. Usually he preferred them and welcomed Donna's occupation with new drafts of thought, adoring her ability to get flavor and nourishment from all without getting drunk on any, gloating over her scientific unwillingness to believe what she was told. And he worshiped her physical response to him, delightful in itself, delicious balm to vanity battered since his birth.

Then his noisome gloom, periodically, spoiled everything.

"Now why do I mind this?" Donna asked herself. "Why be tragic about something that isn't illness or death or poverty? This isn't fundamental. Anyway, why don't I light in and give him hell? I can't. Nobody who hasn't lived with a mooker'd believe it, but when he sits there with his damned mouth droop-

RED DAMASK

ing and his eyes making that slit of light, he exudes a sort of paralysis."

Gloom seeped into her, clouding, chilling every thought. Then she imagined herself taking the carving knife and slicing off his head. She'd like to hang it, dripping, from the mantelpiece. What a funny, surprised look he'd have. He'd open his eyes then!

She felt better.

That night she stayed in a small penthouse on the roof of their apartment. The top of a discarded elevator shaft, it had no windows save a skylight, and the landlord had floored it for Donna, leasing it for twenty dollars a month, which took all her private income. But absolute ownership made it a glamorous escape from family, husband, child, as well as an astronomical observatory.

First she sat on her narrow cot, gulping solitude. She shook herself, lit an oil stove, hung her hat on a hook, wrapped herself in blankets, and probed.

"Now! Nobody ever has been happy all the time, why should I be it? That's that. Why do I take Karl's mooking so hard? I couldn't describe 'em to make anybody see how penetrating, how horrid, they are. Like a sickly smell. Garbage pail. Blow to my vanity, too. Little old Achilles' heel. Karl's blind, deaf, and numb to me tonight, and when you got a snub nose and freckles, and you had a beautiful mother that men went mad about and you were jealous of until you learned how . . . well, numbness hits you where you live. What do I want to go out with Dudley Kenheim for? He's devilishly attractive! Nothing to do with feeling for Karl. Just naturally a bit polyandrous. Tea-deep? Not so sure. A girl's got curiosity. What's life for? Take it as it comes. The chase is fun, too. Gives color to

RED DAMASK

things. Anything else in this? Getting even with Karl for these moods? I don't think so. Why did I tell Karl I was going out to tea with Dud? Showing off before Abby. Self-indulgence. Idiotic. Cut it out. Did Karl get this mood from that, or jealousy of Jack Burns? I can't blame Karl. Of course he works for the fun of it, or he wouldn't do it, but it is hard to have somebody get flashes out of the blue when you can't get 'em out of the deeps! Maybe that veal cutlet we had last night was a factor. Belfry does stunts with veal, but we'll cut it out.

"Also, keep Karl away from Lottie when he's mooking. Have a nice little obstetrical conversation with Lottie's Nana and describe the kind of stepmother Karl would bring home. A noble female who wouldn't let Nanas have beaux in the house. Of course I'd probably live through it, at that, but a little exaggeration suits this occasion. Just as much risk crossing the street. It isn't the thought of dying that gets my goat; it's the thought of being half dead for years, as I've been until lately. Lord! ain't energy wonderful! Talk over son business, with Karl, straight. Let him say he doesn't want to take the risk. Of course it didn't hurt him where it hurt me, so better pick my time. Right after I've told him what that fat man said about his technique in staining tissue. That's that. And now to variable stars! Let's see what S S Cygni's up to."

She opened the skylight, adjusted the telescope, and put a star chart in position, a star chart with comparison stars measured by the Harvard Observatory. Directing the telescope, she swept the sky to find the field marked on the chart.

"I wonder if Karl'll be all right tomorrow? That one he had last month lasted three days. Ugh! Oh, damn! Do I think I'm looking for comets? Where's my knack for finding fields? I will get it."

She got it.

RED DAMASK

"Now. The-ere. Let's check up. There's my variable. Here're my comparison stars." She examined the chart with a dark lantern. "S S Cygni's as bright as 8.5. Impossible!" She looked into her telescope again. "Couldn't be such a rise in magnitude in three days! Maybe I've forgotten my last observations. Not supposed to look 'em over. Prejudice your judgment. But this is such a change!" She consulted her record made three nights ago. "'21 38 43 S S Cygni. 1914—Mo. 12—Day 23.5—Est. 12.2—Obs. H.'" Some little discrepancy to send in to the Harvard Observatory if I'm wrong. Some little excitement, if I'm right! Gee! Maybe my judgment's all off, because I'm low tonight. Let's have another look. She is that bright. No, she isn't. Oh, I don't know what she is. If Karl's not over this tomorrow I'm going out to dinner. Damn! How can I measure brightness with my mind on a garbage pail?"

Resentment seeped through her. Crouched down on her cot, frowning, mouth set for a moment, she gave in to discord. "How dare Karl let go his moods like that? Venom all over the place! . . . Why doesn't he have things out inside himself and face 'em? S'pose they are ugly. Simmering makes 'm worse. Lord! Hasn't he got the guts to know he's no hero? Who is? Poor nut! Raised on cant and Kant. No wonder those Hahls and Wendels breed weak muddlers! Say! Wait a minute, honey! What right have I to call Karl weak? I'm no heroine, either. And what do I know about what's going on inside of him? And what am I trying to do right now, anyway? Make a martyr of myself? Enjoy a miserable evening? I . . . I . . . I . . . Egotist. . . . Weak muddler, too. Weak from hunger, maybe."

She felt for a tin box on the floor, opened it, and munched crackers and a sliver of chocolate. Then she stretched out flat, closed her eyes, and relaxed, muscle after muscle, for a moment. Then she sat up. "Now! You limp, loony spawn of a spavined

RED DAMASK

lizard, don't you realize life's only a jig? There's a pirouette going on up there, in a cosmic dance. Maybe. Maybe nobody's watching right now but you. Why, if S S Cygni's changed that much, it's important! It's perfectly wonderful to catch her on the rise. Moods! Hell!" She stretched herself.

Again she went to the telescope. Quickly this time she re-found her field. "It's true! Gee! S S Cygni's brighter than 8.5! What a change! It's even changed since I've been up here! Um! Yessir! Yezzzz-sirrr! 0.2 degrees magnitude in a few hours! Say!"

She moved away and pressed her hands over her eyes. Cold hands they were, on a face burning with excitement. "I've got it! Ain't it great? Ain't it great? Better be sure. Gotta be sure."

Carefully, coolly, she measured brightnesses again, and then again, one eye outside the lens, wide open, sightless, all her vision concentrated on points of light in that ethereal dome. All her consciousness was concentrated, brought into focus, a human telescope fused to the one man made.

When she was sure the rise she'd seen was real, she decided to telegraph the Harvard Observatory.

She went downstairs.

Karl sat on the sofa in the living room, staring into a dead fire, a dead cigarette in his hand. He wasn't thinking. He was fuming in turbid clouds of subjectivity, clouds he felt and never saw. He only knew he was miserable. The world was to blame.

But his mood seemed dim to Donna now, like an aching tooth after it's pulled.

"Be a lamb and send a telegram for me!" she said.

It was an outraged lion that turned and sent sheer hate out of narrowed lids, hate for anybody from a world that somehow had injured him. He said nothing.

RED DAMASK

Neither did Donna.

Smarting, she grabbed her coat and hat and ran to the nearest telegraph office, her elation coming back as she wrote out her report.

Then she put her hands to her face. "Oh, Sweet Heaven! I've forgotten my pocketbook! I haven't a cent."

The telegraph operator looked cynical. He was used to disheveled women who'd forgotten their pocketbooks. And this one wasn't even good-looking. Her hat was on one side and she had a smudge of soot on one cheek. You bet his girl always looked right!

"Can't you send it collect?" he said, wearily, and glanced at the clock. It was only nine. He couldn't meet Gladys till twelve.

"No, I can't send it collect." (She couldn't go back and ask Karl for money, either. Now? Not much!)

Donna wanted that telegram sent.

She raised her eyes and turned them on that cynical young man, full force. Donna knew how. She smiled, an amazing smile, that deepened her eyes, darkened them, until he didn't see the clock any more, nor her hat on one side, nor the soot on her cheek. He saw nothing but wells of deep dark light that sent out stimulating, warm, sweet fire.

"Won't you lend me the money? I'll promise to send it to you first thing in the morning."

"Why, miss, you needn't be in any hurry. I'm only too glad to oblige!"

The next day Karl was serene. There were no apologies, no scenes. Donna gladly dismissed unpleasantness, unless harboring it served a purpose. She didn't expect perfection from anyone, not even from herself.

RED DAMASK

She knew she was lazy and vain and not unselfish. But she was too lazy and not egotistical enough to reform herself.

Donna was a realist.

Abby looked tired after her visit to the laboratory, and Gilbert canceled their engagement for theater with Elmer and Regina. No longer anxious to go out every evening, Gilbert was over-anxious about rest and remedies for Abby, because, secretly, her needing them rankled.

Her needing them postponed the son he longed for, a clean-cut athlete who'd do everything he couldn't. And ailing was his privilege, anyway; Abby was robust. None of this he realized. But to his shame he realized that it was depressing to face her wan fatigue every evening. She wouldn't stay upstairs and leave him to dine alone. It was boring to listen to how she didn't sleep last night and why she wouldn't sleep tonight. And he had a right to hate an illness that made her irritable and cutting. Comfortably Gilbert could find something to blame for anything that disturbed him. And comfortably he could dream it out of the way.

Now, to divert her, he described a new doll factory he had seen, built to meet the interruption of German trade.

"I suppose if you bought any, you'd order them dressed in neutral tints?" said Abby.

But her irony missed its mark. Gilbert dodged into a reverie, where, instead of eating salad, he opened an official letter from Washington. "The White House, December 26, 1914. Mr. Gilbert Ware, Vice-President, Philip Hahl & Company, Thirty-sixth street, New York. My dear Mr. Ware: The President has been impressed with your recent work for the unemployed. He wants to consult you. . . ." Or would it be "Mr. Wilson has been impressed," or "Mr. President"? Anyway, Gilbert saw

RED DAMASK

himself showing the letter to Abby, Abby in a gold evening hat trimmed with salmon-pink feathers, her brown velvet wrap edged with ermine, the Abby he had proposed to in 1911. (The sad little fairy princess, the lovely lady, who had refused him.) "Oh, Gilbert! How wonderful! I'm so glad, so proud of you!" She kissed him tenderly, her face beaming with joy, her eyes shining like topaz. . . .

The real Abby's eyes were somber, mustard-colored marbles in a wooden face, a mask of sick sullenness. She looked at those soft mulberry curtains drawn across the windows; she looked at the mahogany walls with their silver sheen. It was a nice room. Oh, what of it? She looked at Gilbert, at his clear gray eyes, his fresh-skinned, even features. This was her husband. She would see him across the table every night of her life. And she was sick of those clear gray eyes that never changed except to moisten sometimes. She was tired of those fresh-skinned, even features, features that frowned or smiled so mildly. If he opened those smooth lips and said something reasonable in his well-modulated voice, she'd bite her own lips through. Tense, she waited for it, and waiting she realized that she did not love this man who was her husband. What of it? She was too tired to care. Wearily she told herself it was wrong to live with a man you didn't love. Wearily she told herself it was right to stick to your bargain and marriage was a bargain. She was too tired to argue those conflicting doctrines.

Chocolate soufflé was served; she was too tired not to eat it.

"Shall we go upstairs?" said Gilbert, gently. "I'd go to bed early, if I were you."

"Yes, I think I will." She was too tired to say anything else, too tired to think anything else.

Fatigue had drugged her past a bad crisis, though. Abby's insomnia was a useful complaint.

RED DAMASK

She went to her room, Lewis's old room, the second floor rear extension. Gray-green gauze was drawn across the windows, and light seeped foam-fashion from six jade goblets halved against cool blue-lavender walls. Tonight those wan spots of light seemed somber, even eerie, their shadows queer. One was coffin-shaped, on the carpet. Abby saw it and stood stealthily, telling herself that it came from her bed, a narrow, nunlike bed, made from an old oak chest, on which carved mermaids, forever stranded, wept on chiseled cliffs.

Abby clenched her hands, feeling cold finger tips against hot palms. Her fatigue turned eager. She undressed quickly, turned out the lights, pulled the silken curtain cords, and opened the windows.

Walls faced her. Light in stretched squares of withered gold fell on dark areas below, distorted by iron pickets. Drearily she thought how light, too, was tortured here; shadows couldn't go free. Those reflections were stretched like Karl's guinea pig. What a thing to have seen when she wanted to sleep! Her own ankles felt pulled, rigid. Her shoulders ached.

What was that dark shape below? Something might have been left on the clothesline, but this looked strange, shapeless. And did it move? How low the sill was! Suppose something crept behind her and pushed. Well, what of it? But she turned, stumbling over a chair.

A knock on the door startled her.

"May I come in?" said Gilbert. "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't think you'd have your light out so soon."

"You should have come a little sooner. I was leaning out of the window, and if I'd been startled then . . . Why must you come in suddenly, like this?" she added, furiously.

Gilbert paled. "Abby, promise me you'll never lean out of

RED DAMASK

that window again. What were you doing that for? I'll have to have it barred—for the baby." He smiled.

Abby didn't smile.

"Have you some aspirin? I got a little overheated walking to the store this morning. I think I'll take one to play safe."

She brought a box from her bathroom.

He read the label. "Are you sure this is aspirin?"

"What do you think it is?" Was he going to stand there all night, talking, until she got too wide awake ever to sleep?

She sighed impatiently.

"Well, good night, Abby dear. I hope you'll sleep well. If you just make up your mind to relax and not think about anything . . ."

He kissed her, smooth lips on stiff lips, tightly pressed against her teeth, finger nails pressed harder, plowing soft palms.

"Is there anything . . . I can get for you?"

If he stayed two seconds longer, she'd shriek.

He left.

She gulped the hot milk Dr. Hardenburg had ordered, pressed the switch, and got into bed.

Every muscle tense, every nerve sore, eyes tightly closed, earnestly she pleaded with some unimagined deity for sleep. She had to sleep! How could she stand this, night after night?

"Tick-tick-tick-tick." Now that clock was going to keep her awake. "Tick-tick-tick-tick." But she was too tired to get up and put it away, she argued. "Tick-tick-tick-tick." Louder . . . louder. . . . Ah-h-h! She got up, seized the clock, thrust it into a drawer.

Back in bed, she tried to count sheep going over a fence. She saw a white one limp. That gray fellow crowded so. What a fatty, pushing with its little nozzle. It reminded her of Jojo. Jojo's auburn hair, like Mother's, only curly. Nice straight

RED DAMASK

nose, like Gilbert's. Jojo shouting, "Murr," and something curling up inside her when Jojo's moist little mouth touched her cheek. Jojo gobbling bread and butter. "Nummy-num. Nummy-num!" Was Jojo getting too fat? Why think about that now? She'd ask Dr. Giles.

What if she couldn't stop thinking? What if one thought brought another, forever, thought on thought, an endless staircase of consciousness, leading nowhere? What if she never slept again? She couldn't make herself sleep. Helpless, clamped to consciousness, must she climb step on step, one leading to another, one leading to another . . . thought on thought on thought . . . forever . . . until . . .

Terror oozed through her. Her mind swayed, soaked in bright white light that glittered on stone flights where shadows dimmed gray wells.

What was that lump under her pillow?

As if her eyelids were a cinema screen, she saw a horror story acted, boarding-school lore Regina had told her years ago, years ago forgotten. A girl boasting at a house party that she had no fear; the boys getting a negro's severed hand from some medical students, putting it under her pillow; the party waiting at breakfast the next morning for the girl who didn't come; going to her door; getting no answer; until, frightened, they broke the door down to find her sitting up in bed chewing that hand, gibbering, quite mad.

Ah-hh! Abby could see that dark shriveled skin peeled from blackened bones; she could smell stale blood, sickly, sour-sweet; she could feel that damp cold. . . .

What was that lump under her pillow?

She dared not look; she dared not keep from looking. Suppose she found . . . something . . . suppose she, too, went mad. She sat up in bed. The girl, too, sat up in bed. . . . Desperately

RED DAMASK

she felt under her pillow, lifted it, snapped on the night lamp, and saw an embroidered lily on a Frankfort sheet.

Part of a winding pattern, much too flat to feel, it spored a new terror.

For she wasn't used to reasonless fears. This was her fourth sleepless night. Didn't sleeplessness destroy reason, finally? Suppose actually she did go mad. . . .

No! She wouldn't give in like this. She'd fight for her mind, with her mind.

A little bookstand by her bed was filled with books ordered from Matthew Heron's list. She picked one by Havelock Ellis because it looked hard and heavy, and she read it grimly until she came to:

Sexual relationships, so long as they do not result in the production of children, are matters in which the community has, as a community, little or no concern, but as soon as a sexual relationship results in the pregnancy of the woman, the community is at once interested.

She flung the book on the floor. Mad? Was the whole world mad, or was it merely rotten? It needed a war to cleanse it with a purifying flame. One should read about sex hygiene, but when a well-known man could write such things . . .

Automatically she reached for the book to put it in its place, but her eyes fixed on the carved mermaids on her bedside—fixed and stared. Did that one move? Its rippling hair was like a coil of snakes. Suppose a secret hid in all those coils and curves? What did she know about this chest she slept in? It might have hauled dead bodies from a pirates' cave. White broken bodies, bleached bones pushed through decaying skin. . . .

Now she mustn't be afraid again. How could she be afraid?

RED DAMASK

The light was on. So were the shadows. Why should all the morbid things she'd heard or read prowl now in her mind? There was her familiar dressing table, her amber toilet set, and that lovely old needlepoint stool. Here was her bed also, which she had thought so cleverly contrived. Matthew Heron would like it. That shadow was shaped like a coffin, though, and it may have known a different cleverness in times gone by. . . . That queer groove she felt could have held a stake; heated with a scorching searing point, it may have pierced quivering flesh until smoking. . . .

She set her teeth, flung the covers back, and ran to Gilbert's room.

Light, through her door, poured softly on his even features, showed his breathing, regular and calm. How could he go on sleeping in a front room with night trucks rattling by? No wonder he didn't mind taking it when their room was turned into a second nursery, an empty second nursery. . . . Oh, where did he get that sleep? Why should he have it?

"Gilbert!"

She had to hear a human voice.

"What's it? Whatzzit? Abby! Whatsa matter?" His hair was ruffled, his eyes red. . . . Good Heavens! If he took this long to waken, a lot of good he'd be if the house caught fire.

"It's nothing."

He sighed, turned over, and slept again before she closed the door.

If she, too, only could sleep!

She pulled her lamp chain. . . .

Had she been asleep, or hadn't she? She didn't know. And she had to know. What was the use of being asleep if you didn't know you were asleep?

RED DAMASK

The next morning Abby was called to the telephone.

"Mrs. Ware, this is your butcher's son. I've taken over my father's business and I ain't going to do some of the things my father done, like giving customers' help commissions. I don't think it's right."

"Yes? But why are you telling me about it?"

"Your waitress, that does the ordering. She's left me because I won't give her the commissions my father used to. And meat's been coming to that house from us for twenty-two and a half years. It don't seem fair."

Abby rang Effie's bell, breaking a finger nail on that tiny disk of mother-of-pearl set in a gray enameled plaque on her night table. She pulled the bit off savagely and stood there, waiting.

She wore a brown serge skirt, her accordion-pleated waist and peplum untrimmed crêpe de Chine, dead white. In that room with its lavender walls, her skin looked grayish green, her dry hair lifeless. Only her eyes, their fatigue wiped out, blazed, like a wounded tiger's faced with prey.

Effie came, in her white starched morning uniform of service, the edges of her apron just a little frayed.

"Effie, I want you to know that Mr. Berg's son has telephoned that you've changed butchers because he wouldn't give you commissions. What does this mean? What does this mean, Effie?" said Abby, a queer exultation warming her like wine.

Black-headed pins in a wooden face, Effie's eyes glittered. She stood stockstill, too well trained to remind this rich lady that her new mink coat cost five times her year's wages. Effie had seen the bill. What could this rich lady know about dreading old age and sickness when being unable to work might mean you'd starve? In thirty-three years Effie had advanced from twelve dollars a month to seventy, but so had shoes advanced, and now she had to send food to her sister's family in Vienna.

RED DAMASK

Why should this lady come in to upset everything, giving the nurse trays from the family table and sending Mrs. Ware's goldfish bowl to an asylum, and now wanting to take those few dollars from her savings account? Why, she saved the family much more in employment agency fees! The cook would have left last week, mad because Dora, the chambermaid, had her own boy now and wouldn't go to dance halls with her any more. Hadn't Effie shown her in the *Daily Star* how a fellow stabbed a girl in a cellar that he'd met at one of those dance halls?

This stillness didn't soothe Abby.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" she barked.

"I'd like to talk to Mr. Gilbert, madam." You could talk to Mr. Gilbert, and he knew the house couldn't get along without her!

"Oh, I don't see how you could do such a thing!" Abby went on. "I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself, Effie. Ashamed of yourself! Effie! Answer me!" But she didn't give Effie a chance to answer. For a second she didn't see Effie. She stamped her foot, and stamped it again, and oddly wished she had more feet to stamp. Her voice went on a higher key. "When you've been trusted all these years! Just as if you were one of the family! All these years! Really, Effie, I don't see how you could! It's enough to make one lose one's faith in human nature! I should think your conscience wouldn't give you any rest!"

("Rest! I don't get any rest, but it couldn't be my conscience. What is conscience anyway?" said a little voice inside Abby, but she drowned it in a flood of righteous indignation, a pleasant stimulating flood.)

And Effie thought how Mrs. Gilbert was always talking like Dr. Webster's Daily Sermons in the *Star*, only she never made you feel good the way he did.

RED DAMASK

"I must answer the front door, madam," said Effie. She'd no time for sermons when a bell was ringing. She'd answered bells for thirty-three years.

That night Gilbert said: "Why must you get so excited about it, Abby? We give commissions to professional shoppers at the store. What's the difference? And Effie's been so loyal and faithful."

"You know there's a lot of difference. It's taken into account at the store. These small shops simply add the graft to our bills. But there's no use arguing. It's the principle of the thing. I won't live in the house with a thief. You'll have to choose between us," said Abby, furiously. "Loyal and faithful! Take your choice!"

"Don't be absurd. Effie will go, of course. But I hate to see you so hard, Abby."

He left the room.

"Oh, will I ever sleep tonight, after all this excitement?" thought Abby.

But Gilbert was thinking about a pension for Effie, and how it had to be kept from Abby, his first secret from his wife.

For the rest of the winter Abby struggled with insomnia by night and with servants by day.

Sometimes nights were spent with morbid fears and nameless dreads; sometimes real worries like Jojo's measles, or real thinking about the war or books she read, would fill them. Sometimes exhaustion would double on itself and she would sleep. Then the next day she'd wonder why she slept and try to duplicate everything she ate or did, so that she'd sleep again. She talked of sleep and thought of sleep and lived for sleep.

After a fascinating discussion of art and psychoanalysis at

RED DAMASK

Elinor Riemann's dinner, she stopped going where discussions might take place, however she enjoyed them, because they excited her. At Rose Hahl Kenheim's, where ideas never were broached, an unexpected Englishman here on a commission told his war experiences with unusual philosophical interpretations. Instead of enjoying them, Abby sat there miserably, knowing that they would keep her awake the whole night through.

Evenings had to be restful; so wifely duties were assigned to Sunday mornings, though Gilbert often golfed then. And as they got more and more infrequent, more and more perfunctory, Gilbert had to fight a sense of injury with the reminder that Abby wasn't well. For wanting a fairy princess on an almost irreproachable throne, and having a haughtily conscientious ice maiden, turned a boon to injury merely by degree.

But Abby couldn't escape servant troubles. The cook left when Effie did. Just before a family dinner the new one, quite mad, sent word that she couldn't cook until she had made eight hundred and ninety circles on pink paper to keep devils from her soul. Abby asked the kitchenmaid to finish dinner, and she left the next day; kitchenmaids were not required to finish dinners. A Swedish "greenhorn," just arrived in the country, would do what she was asked, and consequently was sent in an ambulance to Gideon Hospital one midnight; the next morning Dr. Hardenburg phoned that Abby had a little butler for her home. The new waitress wanted help in the pantry at every meal; the chambermaid wouldn't help her; she wasn't used to helping Effie! An excellent cook left to go South, where her friends were. Another wouldn't stay without egg cups for the help and Abby couldn't humor such a whim. Another didn't like the nurse; another Nana didn't like. A "good plain cook" burned meats and undercooked vegetables, and Gilbert, used to good food and willing to pay for it, complained. And Abby spent yet another

RED DAMASK

morning in employment agencies. She bought labor-saving devices. The chambermaid said: "Mrs. Ware, I'm giving you notice. You want a lot of mechanics to run them things. And they make me nervous with the noises."

Abby vainly tried to find a reason for continuous turmoil. She never looked for chance, and her house, she argued, was like about two hundred other houses in New York, similarly organized. Hers had fewer in the family and more in help than many. Surely Effie couldn't make such a difference! Any way, in a moral world, discharging a dishonest servant should bring reward, not punishment.

For Abby still thought she lived in a moral world. And in her ethical patterns certain human factors had no place. There was no place for the need of domination at nineteen East Fiftieth street, a need Abby couldn't meet when she wasn't angry. Now, without the stimulus of her dislike for Effie, she gave orders apologetically, conscious of democratic ideals, a wobbly pilot for a wobbling ship. Nor was there a place for Effie's being not only efficiency personified, emotionally identified with the house, but for her being Abby's brick to throw at the cosmos, a throwing that stimulated Abby to deal with the cosmos. According to Abby's ethical patterns, domination always was wrong; all people were equal; and nice women didn't need bricks.

But in the late spring, in spite of all this, for no apparent reason, a set of servants stayed and worked. And even Abby wouldn't question chance that was beneficent.

Dr. Hardenburg ordered a change of scene for Abby, but Gilbert couldn't get away, so they rented a summer house at Willets, Long Island. Gilbert could commute from there, and there the Herons had a bungalow.

"You have to do what your doctor says," sighed Mother at the

RED DAMASK

season's last family evening. "But it will be very quiet for us at Leitha Beach. Of course we'll have Donna and Karl and dear little Lottie. I am fixing up your old room for Lottie, Abby. I had to go to Semple and Trent's and Smith's and Hutton's before I could find one of those trays that lets down like a little table. The war has made a difference in our lives. But I found it at last. It will be so nice for Lottie and her Nana, and Marta won't have to make two trips up the stairs with two trays."

When Karl said, "But—" Donna ground her heel against his ankle. "Sorry," she lied.

Karl would have told them directly that he would not ask Donna to spend a summer at Leitha Beach; that family life was a bore, not a virtue. He'd like to hurt them. A part of him still feared and was tied to them. But Donna, having no fears, hated hurting people, and obliqueness often got what she wanted without it. Dr. Giles, who also had married into a large family, had promised to forbid Leitha Beach for Lottie. And fixing up that room had given Mother something to do with her spring.

"Aren't these wonderful melons?" chanted Mother.

"Gilbert, what will you do for exercise?" asked Father. "You're too far from the Plainsfield Club."

"You should have taken a house in Caraway County, where your friends are. Mrs. Kenheim is going to be in their fine house there. And your sister Regina. Your sister Regina," said Grandfather.

"Our friends the Herons will be at Willetts," said Gilbert. "Speaking of Heron, did you notice that our fur store front was complimented in the last issue of the *Garmentarian*? But to return to the subject. Caraway County wouldn't be a complete change, Grandfather. Willetts is not an ultra-fashionable com-

RED DAMASK

munity. Maybe I can get a summer membership in the local club."

"Isn't it ridiculous that we can't take ourselves for granted like other people!" said Abby, though the Jewish question might liven a family evening, and Abby wanted it soporific.

Father told his story. "I remember twenty years ago Doctor Hardenburg said I should have more exercise and I asked John Aldrich to put me up at the New York Sports Club. He was my classmate at Yale and we're on the board of the Flower National together. The chairman of the admittance committee said, 'Of course you're not a Jew, Mr. Hahl,' and I said, 'Of course I am, and if that's the sort of question you ask, I don't want to join your club,' and I marched downstairs and withdrew my name."

"And they had twice as much respect for you. Respect for you," nodded Grandfather.

"Being definitely barred. It's maddening," said Abby.

"We should live exemplary lives and rise above it," said Mother. "Aren't these cucumbers delicious?"

"After all, everybody's definitely barred from something," said Donna. "I'll bet your John Aldrich can't get on the platform at Carnegie Hall and Mischa Elman can, and all of you can eat those cucumbers and they'd put me to bed."

"That's sophistry," said Abby.

"What a pity for you to miss these good cucumbers!" said Mother. "Tressa always soaks them well in salt. I must admire your self-control," she added when Donna shook her head.

This was Mother's first admiration of Donna. Encouraged, Donna said, "I had an experience like Father's with my college sorority. One of the girls said, 'Of course you're not a Jew, Donna,' and I said, 'Sure I am, and that's not the half of

RED DAMASK

it, dearie: I'm double-jointed and I had a cowlick until brushing cured it.'"

"Will brushing cure a cowlick?" marveled Mother.

"Did they take you in?" asked Abby, impatiently.

"Uh-huh. They didn't seem to think my Judaism any more important than I did. And it was the oldest sorority in college and they could afford exceptions to blanket rules."

"Then there was a blanket rule. There was prejudice," said Abby, hotly. "Marina wasn't asked into a sorority. If they wouldn't take other Jewish girls, I don't see how you could . . ."

"Do you think my roommate felt responsible for all the Unitarian lemons in college? I don't hate being a Jew. How can you hate yourself? And a cultural heritage is not to be sniffed at. But I do hate the way Jews make ghettos wherever they go. That's why Jews aren't wanted in spontaneous social groups. If you invite a Jew you've got to expect her sisters and her cousins and her aunts and all her in-laws' friends, whether you like 'em or not. Jews don't consider just plain liking important! Anyway, sorority girls are athletes, officeholders, or cut-ups mainly. Most Jewish girls take themselves too seriously to qualify. Imagine Marina on a lark!"

"Marina is a fine girl. A fine girl," said Grandfather, gravely. Was it possible that Karl's wife was flippant? Young people should take themselves seriously, and they shouldn't want relatives slighted. And why should Marina go on a lark at college? Her parents sent her there to study!

Nobody spoke.

Everybody ate chocolate pudding.

Father was thinking: "That girl's too sure of her opinions. Just like Karl to pick her out instead of a fine woman of the old school like his mother. Why isn't she having more children? I want to see a grandson at Philip Hahl & Company!"

RED DAMASK

Mother thought: "I'm afraid Karl has married a frivolous wife. And I haven't seen her outside of Sunday nights for months! Well, this summer I'll have an opportunity to guide her. Isn't this a superb pudding? I must have it the next time Sophie comes. . . ."

Gilbert was remembering that he didn't go out for the track team at Yale because they said track was hard on hearts.

Abby was wondering why she had that prescription for sleeping powders filled, when she didn't mean to take it. "You're making a moral issue out of medical routine," Dr. Hardenburg had said. But an image from some forgotten book or play, of a drug addict, with chalky face and haunted eyes, and whining shambling lips, fought the family habit of obeying doctors' holy orders. If she couldn't will herself to sleep she'd stay awake, she decided, miserably.

Donna sincerely was cursing the lot. Damn their fatuous pomposity! Blithely in 1914 she had compared them to a lake of molasses, and advised Abby to wriggle. A year's weekly ducking in that lake, a year's wriggling made a difference. Why didn't she talk food and cant and steamers and articles in the *Eclectic Monthly*? Usually she talked what people wanted. Why couldn't she appreciate Grandfather's sunny good will and his mannerisms, Father's strength, and Mother's culinary hallelujahs? She had, before she knew she'd be sitting there every Sunday night till she died! They'd never die and she'd never kick them in the face as Karl wanted her to. She didn't want to hurt people. But she'd been brought up to consider boredom a serious sin. She was bored. She felt antagonistic, too, which was new and unpleasant. That patient air of reproof! Their individualities melted into a holy hydra with brainless heads! Outside, Abby was human, lovable. Here she was an irritated prig, and Gilbert a complacent one! Outside he was

RED DAMASK

a dear, if not thrilling. And outside she herself could accept any reality. Why didn't she say, "Yes, I'll be dead for three hours every Sunday evening." B-r-r! She hated death! But Karl! Ah, Karl, the darling, here of all places was free. He was looking at her, and his eyes warmed her with their smoldering fire.

"You darling!" thought she.

In fact, here was Karl most free. Here, Donna personified his reaction from this family who always had curbed and humiliated him. Many times had he been sent from this very table before all his aunts and uncles because his hands were stained or his tie spotted or because he argued with Father. Now, in his old seat, he could kindle Donna's great deep eyes and realize that this funny, fascinating girl with a brain was his wife, a wife who understood him, who gave him joy and released him from scheduled attitudes. It was like them not to appreciate her.

Outside, often he wasn't free. When Donna eluded them he dreaded Mother's long face, an absurdly potent weapon. Often he wished they'd die, and was aghast, uneasy, for wishing it. He dreaded their making trouble between him and Donna, the most wonderful thing in his life. He wanted her to avoid them, but how much she avoided she didn't know. She thought weekly gatherings enough. He knew they were outraged, patiently, silently, pervasively outraged because they didn't see her every day. He had to excuse and explain their having only one child when he wanted another. He had to excuse Lottie's playing in the Park when Rose Hahl Kenheim's three-year-old and Max Hardenburg's, when all Hahl and Wendel children over three, were supposed to punch what might have been a family time clock in Grandfather's study. And he couldn't reason about his defensive attitude, this tie that hadn't bound when there was something definite to cut. Easily he had cut it for his career. Vague habits baffled him, as much as his own moods did. When

RED DAMASK

he felt one coming, hopelessly he went down under it, a blind swimmer, mauled by surf he never saw, and never thought about afterward.

As the women left the dining room, Grandfather sang out: "We're at Aurelia's tomorrow night, aren't we, Erna? There is no enjoyment like a nice family evening. Nice family evening."

"What chance has pure reason against such impure strength?" thought Donna, and then giggled inside. "Idiot! Trying to ennoble mosquito bites. Abby's vortex is nothing but a bunch of bores religious about their bunchedness, and they get my goat because they make me feel inferior. To standards I don't give a damn about. They don't admire anything but my ability to resist cucumbers. Little old Achilles' heel again. All right, if you want them to admire you, lunch with Mother tomorrow and go shopping with her and have five more children and a big apartment with servant troubles and go walking with Grandfather every day. Nuh-uh! Then stop trying to make cancers out of mosquito bites. Suppose you had cancer, or Lottie got hurt, or Karl ate onions all the time! That'd be serious."

Chapter Fourteen

ABBY liked Willetts, Long Island.

She liked the old white house they had rented, with its bright blue wooden shutters. Unexpectedly it rambled on its hillside with three steps down to the dining room and two steps up to the library. The five bedrooms were each on different levels. Beyond a rocky wooded lawn was a winding dirt road, and across it a salt meadow led to Long Island Sound. Abby liked the meadow's tart, briny smell; its changes fascinated her. On sunny days at low tide, gray reedy pools turned blue, and green grasses waved gold wires over mauve shadows. At high tide the Sound sent a silver disk to the road's edge, a variable disk that took its color from the sky and its surface from the the winds. And the Sound, on misty nights, could whip a quiet milky plain to choppy pitching crags, glittering black, with hissing tips of white foam, in a trice—all so unlike the even roars and endless waves of the ocean. The ocean meant Leitha Beach to Abby, and family duties and a world she no longer cared for.

But Gilbert disliked Willetts.

He liked Leitha Beach; he was used to it. He wasn't used to a house full of unexpected steps for people to fall over. Such an old house couldn't have good plumbing, though the sanitary engineer he sent out approved it; and he suspected that salt meadow, too, whatever the expert said. And Jojo might tumble on the rocky lawn which Abby kept unmown. Moreover, it stayed wet after rain, and he was afraid Nana would forget Jojo's rubbers. And at low tide he couldn't get his evening dip, and the beach was too pebbly anyway. In fact, Gilbert, who

RED DAMASK

had stayed safe in his gilded ghetto, now felt the pricks of anti-Semitism.

The dinner coat class from around Willetts commuted to New York in a club car, a private parlor car with movable leather chairs and bridge tables and a special porter. Gilbert had to ride in the common coach.

"Why haven't I seen you in the club car?" asked Henry Fuller, at the station one day. He lived at Romney, near Willetts, and, having served on several Retail Association Committees with Gilbert, he liked him. (Nobody ever disliked Gilbert.)

"I'm not a member," said Gilbert.

"Why aren't you a member?"

"I've never been asked."

"I'll see about that."

And the next week Gilbert got a letter from Fuller saying that the seats all were taken; he would let Gilbert know if there was a vacancy.

But he didn't.

"Maybe the car is filled," said Abby. "That's a perfectly good reason."

"It's always a perfectly good reason. I wish they'd come right out and say they don't want Jews. Why, any drunken bum who can pay the extra fare can get a seat in that car if he just isn't a Jew."

"You've got a chip on your shoulder," said Abby. "You ought to make an effort to get rid of it. Suppose there is a little prejudice? If you look for it, you'll find more. You ought to conquer your attitude toward it, and act normal about things, and take it for granted that the club car is filled. Really! Now you want to play golf. If you were just any new member of this community, what would you do?"

RED DAMASK

"I'd be asked to join the club right away. Or I'd mention it to a friend."

"Why don't you do just that? Show some initiative. Don't be such a watchful waiter!" said Abby, scornfully comparing him to Wilson's foreign policy after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, a policy that maddened her, that summer, a little less than Gilbert maddened her.

For Gilbert was too patient, too considerate, too reasonable, when she was cross. He put her in the wrong where Abby couldn't bear to be, but she couldn't help being cross to him. As if a demon steered her tongue, it took every side he didn't take. Basic health and country air almost had cured her insomnia; they hadn't helped her basic bitterness, a bitterness too directly steered to end in anti-Semitism, such a convenient melting pot for Gilbert's puzzled pains.

The pot boiled after Abby spurred him to light it.

Against his better judgment, Gilbert told Tom Kent, a young fellow who had sold him insurance, that he wanted to join the Willetts Country Club.

The next week he met Tom Kent at the station news stand, and when he eagerly began to discuss Wilson's last note, "Act normal about things" rang in Gilbert's mind like a school bell.

"I say, Kent, did you do anything about the country club?" said Gilbert, obeying it, desperately.

Kent reddened. So did Gilbert.

"Why, I mean . . . It seems . . ." he stammered, "there's a long waiting list, Ware."

"You mean they don't want Jews," said Gilbert, quietly, because he wanted to get it straight for Abby this time.

"Oh, some sort of unwritten law. Blanket rule, I mean. It's ridiculous. I don't believe in it myself. Why, some of my best friends are Jews! I mean . . . There's the train!"

RED DAMASK

Kent ran for it.

The sustaining thought of telling Abby left Gilbert, left him with the feeling of being stripped in that busy station, stripped to a burning flush. "Well, I've learned my lesson," he told himself. "I'll never risk another rebuff."

The platform teemed with communal life.

Wives in linen frocks backed automobiles on the cindered incline.

"Don't forget that biscuit for Snap. J-U-M-B-O."

"Orme, bring Bill out for dinner."

A grinning porter helped husbands with brief cases and newspapers into the airy club car.

"It's a long, long way to Tipperary! Get a move on! Who said four hundred points before we get to Jamaica?"

"Let me see your *Times*. Kelly sold out again. What do you make of that last Wilson note? A fellow I know in Washington . . ."

"Hey there, Rank! I want to speak to you."

Nobody wanted to speak to Gilbert. No porter helped him with his brief case and newspaper and the *Eclectic Monthly*. He had to push past Italian workmen and large women with small children eating bananas, into the coach, and this morning he found no seat.

He remembered a Mammy song he had heard in vaudeville when he was a boy:

Now, honey, jus' play in yo' own back yard;
Don' min' what those white folks say.

He remembered that old still picture thrown in metallic colors on a wrinkled sheet, of a negro youngster sobbing in his mammy's lap, while white children played on the other side of a bright gold fence. Tears came to his eyes.

RED DAMASK

A curve flung him against some chattering shopgirls, girls from his own store, for all he knew.

"God! I'd like to pull up stakes and leave this country and live in Europe where this thing doesn't exist for people like us."

When he changed cars at Jamaica, Henry Fuller didn't speak to him, because he was near-sighted and had broken his glasses.

"More prejudice," thought Gilbert, miserably.

When he told Abby about it, she said: "Oh, what's the difference? You can motor over to Plainsfield for golf, and it isn't going to hurt you to ride in the coach. Mike Heron rides in it."

"None of the women have called on you, either."

"Mercy, Gilbert! I don't want 'em! We've got the Herons and we can have friends out from town whenever we like. It's childish to take this place seriously."

"It's all right for you. You don't run into it twice a day at the station. And I had lunch today with Ben Sinclair. He's running Tracy's now. He lives farther out on Long Island, and I said I missed the back-country Jersey roads for riding, and he said, 'Why, the Mercer Hunt Club has some excellent roads!' I guess they forget. I should have said, 'Yes, but they don't take Jews.' That would have taught him something."

"What?" said Abby, cruelly, repelled by the hurt tears in Gilbert's nice gray eyes. How could he be so tragic about a few rebuffs from a group of uninteresting provincial people? She liked Willetts, where the Sound was, and the marsh, and the Herons! Conscientiously, she thought of them plurally.

Again that illustrated Mammy song flashed through Gilbert's mind. The little black boy had a lap to sob in.

But he poured all his puzzled pains into anti-Semitism. He called it an impassable barrier and said he was kept from normal American life; barred from country clubs and city clubs where his

RED DAMASK

kind belonged; barred from directorships in certain banks, from entering his child in exclusive schools. He called any acquaintance who didn't pursue him anti-Semitic. And when his feelings got too hot he cooled them with a daydream, a special dream for commuting, in which a titled Englishman came to Willetts, a combination of Henry Esmond and Sir James Balfour, whom he had met at an industrial conference. He fancied Sir Henry Esmond-Balfour choosing him for a friend because he alone in Willetts had culture (Matthew Heron didn't count; he took a later train), because Gilbert alone in Willetts cared about art and knew about music and read serious books and had a high place in the country's industry. And as acquaintances hurried past to their club car, with perfunctory nods, he pictured Sir Henry Esmond-Balfour beside him in the coach, though Rankin Sanderson and his crowd gnashed Nordic teeth in their club car.

In fact, Gilbert's high place in the country's industry only made him a bigger melting pot for Willetts' puzzled pains. (The war was still too far away.)

Rankin Sanderson, the president of the Willetts Country Club, was the eighth vice-president of a failing insurance company, and when Gilbert got into a Pierce-Arrow landaulet with a uniformed chauffeur at the wheel, he trudged across the road to a dusty garage where he kept a dustier Ford. "Damned Jews!" said he. "If you didn't keep 'em down they'd be everywhere." Dr. Orme North said: "A Hebrew is a Hebrew. You can't get away from it. They've spoiled New York and they'll spoil this place if we let 'em. Why, my wife says her cook says Mrs. Ware pays her cook eighty dollars! Giving the other help ideas! But who ever heard of a Jew thinking of anybody else! We Norths never could stand 'em. My grandfather, back in 1862, black-balled What's-his-name, that old Spanish Jew banker. The Union Club. He was supposed to

RED DAMASK

be almost a white man. Lincoln's friend. But we Norths can't stand Hebrews."

They couldn't stand work, either, which only partly explained Dr. North's scant practice. Unfortunately, people's ailments would move faster than his mind, and patients sometimes talked, so he and all the other failures had a just grievance in Gilbert's palpable success. For Willetts just happened to be full of failures: three unsuccessful brokers lived there; so did an admiralty lawyer who was trying to sell real estate. Webster Troy, "our artist, you know," made an excellent living with his trick drawings for the Lower-Lite Company, but what a bitter description he gave to fair dinner partners of the sinister ring controlling American art, forcing the sincere artist into commerce! Then, except for Dr. North and Mrs. Brentwood, nobody in Willetts ever had had any social position; excluding somebody gave them a feeling of superiority. But Mrs. Brentwood, whose mother was a Severne, excluded the Wares only because they had crucified Christ. She was very religious; she decorated the altar at the local St. Thomas's on special Sundays, and gave up a corner of her own garden to grow wheat there for the harvest festival; she wore dowdy clothes and had oily hair. No wonder Richard Brentwood damned Jews when he saw Abby at the post office—a very charming Abby, in soft flowered silk with a mustard-colored sport hat, just a little darker than yellow-irised eyes, smiling eyes, in a heart-shaped face that glowed under its tan as Matthew Heron teased her about the books Gilbert was unwrapping.

"Abby! Oh, Abby! Blood, brutes, and bastardy! Freud's *Introductory Lectures to Psycho-Analysis*. *Sanine*. *Spoon River Anthology*. *The Red Laugh*. Did you ever hear the fable of the Easter lily that tried to turn tiger? I didn't, either. But

RED DAMASK

there ought to be one. Spots burned right through. White skin too tender. Careful, Abby!"

"Shouldn't she read those books?" asked Gilbert, anxiously. "Are they immoral?"

"No, but your question is," laughed Heron, a friendly arm on Gilbert's shoulder. "And a wiser man than I said it first."

But Richard Brentwood heard stray words without their context. "Fine talk in the post office," thought he. "Evidently too much for that architect chap, and he's plain-spoken, they say. Why, we'd have chaos if it weren't for Christianity! I'll send Doctor Underwood that extra check for the new organ. And I'll tell Sanderson not to let those Jews use that short cut through the old club road. They haven't any right to it."

The old club road, now in disuse, was a macadamized angle meeting near the house the Wares lived in, its short side skirting the salt meadow, a short cut to the beach. The other side led to a fork where the new club road turned toward the station. It saved Gilbert five minutes' commuting time and Jojo could walk to the beach. The state road meant motoring almost to the village and back, going all around the salt meadow.

Gilbert showed Abby a polite note reminding him that the old club road was private property.

"Now, Abby"—his voice trembled—"isn't this enough? Let's leave this place. These people don't want us."

"What do I care what these people want?" said Abby, furiously. "Show the white feather and run? Leave this perfectly lovely house and our friends the Herons because of a lot of cheap, alcoholic, bridge-playing sports? Good Heavens! I'm glad they let me alone! Do you think I want to talk to that bunch of brainless squaws? Our Jewish friends may be dull sometimes, and some of them haven't such wonderful manners,

RED DAMASK

but Elinor Riemann and none of that crowd would run from an idea as if it were Big Bertha! Why, Mike Heron says they . . . Not that this crowd is representative as far as Gentiles are concerned. Don't get that in your head, either. And you don't see the Herons acting any different toward us, do you? That's the point. The trouble with you is, you've never put yourself out enough to make any real friends outside the crowd you were born in. You can't expect chance acquaintances to fight to get you in anything. Why do you think Dudley Kenheim is a member of the River Club? Why, this Willetts crowd would give their heads to get into it. It's because two or three of the governors were intimate friends of his, and cared more about getting him in than anybody cared about keeping him out. What friends have you ever made to fight for you?"

Abby's excitement always quieted Gilbert. "It isn't normal to have somebody fight to get you into a country club, is it? Anyway, Dudley is a bachelor and has time for outside friends. When you care about your wife and your home . . . Anyway, Abby, Dudley qualified for the bi-state championship. I think his golf helped him just as much as his friends."

"Exactly. You score about a hundred and two, don't you? That's the average Jewish score. If you care about clubs and things you've got to qualify for them. Nobody wants to hear about economics and employment legislation in a locker room. That's why I'd rather go with intelligent people like the Herons."

In fact, the idea of not going with "the Herons" bred Abby's excitement. She couldn't bear the thought of leaving "them" on account of what she called Gilbert's "petty rebuffs," which she saw in proportion to the universe instead of in relation to him. She intellectualized his rebuffs. (Nobody had rebuffed her.) And her sympathetic imagination still was numbed. Nor could she bear the thought of how much it would mean to leave "the

RED DAMASK

Hérons." She intellectualized "them," too. In fact, Abby was intellectualizing everything this summer, consciously absorbed in ideas. They intoxicated her, absorbing some of the stimulation she got from Matthew Heron and from renewed physical well-being. Her brain seized on the strongest stuff it could get. It puzzled over Bergson. Freud's early lectures, shocking even to Freud (he admitted it), she took objectively. Gasping, Abby accepted Œdipus complexes and phallic symbolism as if they were an icy shower, fighting off palpitations with the knowledge that Matthew Heron would tease her if she gave in to them, backed by a genuine intellectual curiosity. She read the heaviest books on the war. She glutted through Russian literature because it was violent. (Her life was so tame.) Its first followers in America she defended scornfully, with an intensity that showed how hard she had to fight her own misgivings about them. Her sophistication was too new, too superficial, and she was too proud of it.

Busied with such exciting cerebral adventuring, how could she bother with trivial social manifestations in Willetts?

Gilbert got no sympathy from her.

He described the situation to Matthew Heron.

"It's absurd, but you don't know your luck!" said Matthew Heron. "I wish I didn't have to join the damned club. Cocktails make me sick, but everlasting talk about business, and bridge and golf scores, would make me sicker without them. And one man will quote the *Times* editorial on the last Wilson note and another will quote the *Tribune*, and if they differ, there's an argument. But Lucia thinks that man Brentwood is going to build a house, and what's an architect to do with a family to think of? I won't have my boy feel small at college, as I did,

RED DAMASK

because I never could afford to do things with other fellows," he added, somberly.

Gilbert, curiously, invited confidences. But now he looked uncomfortable. For the thought of people needing money inevitably made him uncomfortable, and Gilbert never hid feelings when he had them.

"After all, you can't expect a prep-school boy to have a philosophy," said Matthew Heron, dryly. "It's a senior study."

Lucia Heron pretended to cultivate the Willetts Club for the Brentwoods, unwilling to tell Mike her real purpose. She wanted to get "in" with Willetts society. Never fooling herself about anything, she knew she wanted to make up for having lived on the wrong side of the railroad tracks in Elsboro. Having been out of everything, for once she wanted to be "in" everything. She knew the higher circles in New York were beyond her, and she wouldn't try for what she couldn't get. So she was careful to wear the right clothes and the right opinions in Willetts, and never to have the Wares for dinner except with their own friends from New York, or with the Webster Troys.

When Gilbert noticed this Abby said: "There's your chip again! Didn't they have us with the Webster Troys the other night?"

"Very appropriately. Like a barb party at college. The Troys aren't the best local fraternity, my dear. They say the first Sunday they were here, Mrs. Brentwood pointedly left the church when they entered it. They didn't go again, I hear. Of course the fast set runs with them, and they belong to the club, but not the best crowd. Webster Junior was born six months after their marriage, and Troy wasn't supposed to have been the first man in her life, either. You needn't think I like the idea of your being at the table with a woman like that. But

RED DAMASK

when you're with artists, you meet all kinds. And I must say Matthew Heron is as fine a fellow as I ever met, and Lucia is a lovely woman. And Webster Troy speaks very cordially at the station."

(He would. He was doing some advertising circulars for Philip Hahl & Company.)

"Well, I didn't notice any horns on Mrs. Troy," said Abby, surprisingly.

Indeed, her hornlessness had surprised Abby. For having only recently learned to read about scarlet creatures, she wasn't ready to meet one. She met Mrs. Troy with a mixture of righteous indignation and thrilled curiosity. (Knowing Gilbert's disapproval sustained the thrill.) What would such a woman be like? Tall, with light blue eyes and a fluffy auburn pompadour, Elise Troy was a typical belle of nineteen hundred, her beauty worn, like a dress too often sent to the cleaner. Somewhat older than her husband, she was palpably worried about it. Otherwise, amazingly, she reminded Abby of Mother! Her eyes and figure and hair were similar, and similarly, she talked of food and home and children and her own daily routine. She even raised her eyebrows when Abby quoted from the *Spoon River Anthology* and Abby was half angered, half amused.

But in literature in 1915 the scarlet woman, midway between sackcloth and laurel, wore rue. Affected by it more than she knew, a child of her time, Abby said: "Gilbert, did you notice the way Mrs. Troy looked older at the end of the evening? She's tired and worried about showing her age and losing her husband. I bet he isn't true to her. Of course she deserves it, but you can't help feeling sorry for her."

Anyway, she had changed the subject. Abby was bored with talking about anti-Semitism.

RED DAMASK

Now that Nana and Jojo couldn't use the old club road, they had to use the car every morning. The Brentwoods' nurse told Nana the reason, and in turn she resented it for Jojo and enjoyed it for herself. These Jews with all their money (she had so little) were kept out of things!

And now when Abby went to town she took the train.

She took the nine-ten, the shoppers' train, one cool morning in September, and when she saw Lucia Heron she wondered vaguely. They had dined together the night before and Abby had said she was going in to order fall clothes. Lucia had said nothing. But often Lucia said nothing. When they dined together Abby and Mike talked to each other, and Gilbert talked to Lucia. She looked beautiful, and however unresponsive, being a Gentile, she was glamorous.

If Lucia saw Abby now she made no sign.

She sat three seats ahead, diagonally, and a woman with a large bunch of hydrangeas could have been in the way.

Abby jumped up and greeted Lucia.

"Shall I sit with you?" smiled Abby.

"Oh, my dear, I'm so sorry!" warbled Lucia's blurry voice. "I met Mrs. Troy in the station and promised we'd sit together."

Two seats in front of her, Abby opened her newspaper.

"Why, how do you do, Mrs. North?" said Lucia. "Do take this seat with me. I didn't know you were going to town. It's a great day for shopping, isn't it?"

Lucia had all she could get from Abby, by this time, and sitting with her here would advertise a friendship on the wrong side of Willetts' metaphorical railroad tracks. Mrs. Brentwood herself was across the aisle with Mrs. Sanderson, and Mrs. North was the president of the Garden Club, which Lucia ached to join, an ache that dulled some qualms. "Nobody ever over-

RED DAMASK

hears me," she thought, glibly, "and Abby's so crazy about the war, she's dead to the world when she's reading about it."

Lucia's voice was indistinct, but not indistinct enough. Abby couldn't help overhearing it. First it simply bewildered, confused her. "Mrs. Troy might have turned back at the last moment," she argued with herself. No. When the train started Lucia could have hailed her again, had she wanted to. Evidently Lucia didn't want to sit with her. Why? Was Lucia trying to snub her, to snub her because she was a Jew? There could be no other reason. Abby felt sickish, then angry. "When I've tried to do everything I could for them!" ("Them.") Mike Heron wouldn't stand for this! Stand for it? Who'd ever tell him about it? Lucia wouldn't. Not she! And there was such a thing as pride. And oh, what would become of her lovely friendship with them? ("Them.")

She didn't want to think about it. She tried to read in her paper about the Russian retreat. Ordinarily it would have maddened her. Now it seemed only so many sentences made of so many words. She looked out of the window at sunlight spilling on passing fields like golden coins. Golden coins. When they clinked, there was a difference! Mrs. Sanderson nodded perfunctorily as Abby happened to look across the aisle. That morning she called to collect for the Red Cross she hadn't been perfunctory! "Mrs. Ware, I can't tell you what this means! It's wonderful to have Willetts make such a fine showing!" (Willetts made a finer showing after she collected from Gilbert, though he had contributed generously in New York. But then she was through with the Wares, to Gilbert's wistful disappointment.) Abby hadn't cared, but now. . . . Bitterness, fierce bitterness pushed through her.

So did Lucia's conversation with Mrs. North, though she tried not to listen.

RED DAMASK

"Oh, have you heard the terrible thing that happened to Rankin Sanderson?" Mrs. North was saying. "You know he belongs to the Tuna Club in California, and he crossed the continent to get a Tuna button. They give them, you know, and it's wonderful to have one."

"I know," chanted Lucia.

"Well, Rank got a big tuna on his line and played it all day until it got exhausted in the water, but he was too dead himself to reel it in. The president of the club himself, the club's president, brought him out a whisky and soda, but he just couldn't reel in the line. His fingers were numb. They say he just broke down and sobbed."

"Did he get the button?"

"Oh no! He had to let the fish go."

"Isn't that awful!"

"Yes, it certainly was awful. Really awful. After all that."

"It must have been awful," agreed Lucia.

"Are you going to hear those wonderful lectures on the war at the Hilton Hotel this winter?"

"Who is giving them?"

"Well, I don't know exactly; I really don't know. But Mrs. Brentwood is a patroness and they're on Tuesday mornings. Tuesday is such a convenient day for lectures, don't you think so? There's always something on Monday. But Tuesday. Now Thursday is the day for our Garden Club. We are doing such wonderful things in our Garden Club, Mrs. Heron. Truly wonderful. Last week we had a woman come out and give a nature talk. It was so stimulating."

"It must have been."

Mrs. North was silent. Lucia's strong white hand went back to her barrette, fumbling with it nervously, her capable hand,

RED DAMASK

with Matthew Heron's wide gold ring on it, usually poised and firm.

"Well, I think it's going to be a cool day, don't you? The paper says cool," said Mrs. North, opening the paper.

"Oh! Er, what was the nature talk about? At the Garden Club, I mean," asked Lucia, brightly, so brightly that her voice, unused to effort, cracked a little.

Abby noticed it, and curled her lip at the feeling in it, more feeling than ever she had heard in Lucia's voice. Why, she was reverential about that Garden Club, like a nun invoking Heaven through a priest!

"The nature talk? Oh, I don't remember what she said, exactly. Her name began with an R. . . . Rivers? No. Rollins? No. I believe it was Austen! Now why did I think it began with an R? She talked about nature. How logical it is and how much we can learn from it. The dear little birds. So devoted to their nests and all. And the flowers. Beauty, you know. Just being beautiful to make us happy. There was something about attracting bees. But I'd rather just think about how lovely flowers are. Especially in the spring, don't you think so, Mrs. Heron? That reminds me. I do hope you will join our Garden Club, Mrs. Heron. Only last week Mrs. Brentwood said we must ask Mrs. Heron to join us."

"Why, I'd just love to!" said Lucia deeply, as if confirmed at a sacred font.

What a heaven to reach for, thought Abby, scornfully. (She didn't name hers.) Being barred from it was no tragedy! Being barred involuntarily from anything was humiliating, though, and so was being snubbed. Because of being a Jew. What was her Judaism made of, anyway? Was it a race? Scholars disagreed. Certainly she felt no difference! Her Judaism seemed only an accident of birth, like her wealth. Ah, was wealth a Jewish

RED DAMASK

characteristic? You didn't find much of it in Houston street, and it was a fact that in America the super-millionaires were not Jews.

That man across the aisle was a stock Jew, greasy and dark and hooked of nose. His thick-lidded eyes snapped shrewdly and his hands moved as he talked in loud, repellent lingo, to a race-track sport in a checked suit, who was palpably Anglo-Saxon, equally unalluring. Now what had she in common with that greasy man? A mechanical absolution, Donna would say, to blame individual defeats on! Donna had coined the phrase for Marina, who unjustly, comfortably, blamed everything on anti-Semitism.

But what else could you blame for their Willetts experiences? Of course they were a stupid crowd. She knew no Jew as stupid as this Mrs. North. How about Gilbert's aunt, Mrs. Riemann? But Gilbert was twenty times as cultured as any man in Willetts. How about Matthew Heron? Oh, how could you draw conclusions about Jews and Gentiles, when individuals varied in every particular? In her own crowd, a close group, a gilded ghetto, each person was separate, different, alone. In her own family, likewise. Why, inside herself she was different, at different times, with different people!

And how about this link, this Jewishness, supposed to bind? Why, she had felt more linked, more at home, with the Herons. ("the Herons") than with anyone else she ever knew.

Oh, she couldn't bear to think of that wrecked friendship!

Not bearing to think of it, she thought of Judaism, abstractly, objectively, analysis her runaway road. She always took it zig-zag-wise, away from her deepest hurts, away now from memories of this summer, this happy summer, its days strung on evenings with the Herons. Evenings when all dulled, grayed, if Matthew Heron left the room; when all glowed with his return.

RED DAMASK

Happily, without analyzing, Abby simply knew she liked "them," enjoyed "them." No wonder, now, she went so far on her run-away road, away from dullness ahead and grayness forever. Thinking about that change from glow to gray would have horrified her. So she thought about Judaism.

She remembered Jack Bernstein's saying, "My parents get something out of Judaism. I get nothing but slights." And she had loathed his apostasy. But how could you be an apostate from nothing? Orthodox Jews had a religion, a spiritual consciousness. She had neither. Then Jack had been right to change his name, to escape from a trap without cheese!

Why shouldn't they escape, also, or stay in their golden trap! They wanted new contacts, broadening influences, outside. Outside where Jewish royalty were rats nobody wanted to catch.

And why? Because stupid people who didn't think things through identified every Jew with that greasy man across the aisle, whose mannerisms were repellent, doubtless even more repellent to her. He was a hideous veil that stupid people couldn't see her through, like the stock Irishman with a red face and a clay pipe, or the vaudeville Englishman who couldn't see a joke. Stupid people. Was Lucia stupid? Were "the Herons" stupid? Vaguely that plurality began to part and to keep it from parting too definitely, Abby wondered if other veils, other stock ideas about life itself, weren't stupid.

Suddenly she conceived a world where no words guided your way, where every step was separate, on its own responsibility, in its own time, and of its own place. Where keen eyes watched for precipices, measuring distances that sturdy hearts might dare. It was a difficult world in which you couldn't stop thinking. Words, pretty words, shining veils, thought for you, leading where the herd went, some to safety, some to misery. But she was

RED DAMASK

getting away from the Jewish question, she reminded herself grimly, because she wanted to get away from it. There was no answer, and she liked answers.

It wasn't a moral question. It was social. And people who mattered didn't care whether you were a Jew or a Jaina if they liked you. Suppose Gilbert didn't get into clubs. He could walk for exercise. He said business deals often came from club contacts. Well, they weren't starving for business! Once Donna said that after adolescence clubs were like trees for apes to chatter on, survivals from primitive infantilism when creatures didn't socialize separately and spontaneously. They belonged to children. Exactly. There was the rub. Clubs wouldn't belong to their children! And children could be hurt when they were left out and snubbed. Their hurts might canker, too. Why, Mike Heron was slaving so that his boy would be able to do what the others did at college. Not because what they did was important, but not being able to do them might be important for John. Mike said youngsters had no sense of proportion. Being made to feel small could injure them permanently.

Her children wouldn't feel small at Leitha Beach, nor in Caraway County, with the Riemanns and the Kenheims and the Brockfields. They'd be padded with red damask, though, built of a pattern in a piece, dancing round and round in a golden trap, getting nowhere. Well, how about doing as Jack had done? Ah, there was a difference! He had been obscure. His trap was tin. Theirs wasn't. Ware was not a particularly Jewish name, but their fame was Jewish. As Jews they were known in Jewish charities, in industry, in New York life, in the life of the nation. And how could they join a Gentile church without being hypocrites? They couldn't accept a creed. None of their Gentile friends had one. And they couldn't deny

RED DAMASK

a creed they didn't have, without being called social climbers, apostates, disloyal: uglier veils for people to see their children through. And all because golden traps were more conspicuous than tin! What of disloyalty, anyway? Why should she be loyal to that greasy man across the aisle? What was loyalty? Wasn't it just another veil for tired eyes that couldn't see?

The train pulled into the station. To avoid Lucia, (and her disloyalty, a special disloyalty) Abby dashed down the aisle.

"Other way out, madam. Other way," said the conductor.

"Please open this door!" blazed Abby.

He opened it.

"Now was that Jewish?" she wondered as she walked up the stairs. "Pushing through?"

She rushed for a taxicab. So did Mrs. Brentwood. Three yellow rattlers hooted and chugged on the down grade, under the station's vast stone dome, blocked by somebody's valet with three bags, seven suit cases, and two and a half small dogs.

Mrs. Brentwood marched across the road.

"You're not allowed to do that, madam," said an officer. "You'll have to get in when they come around."

She looked at him, continued on her way and got into a taxicab.

Abby smiled to herself. "Pushing isn't Jewish, then. I guess it's economic. People used to having their way because they have money."

But then she remembered Grandfather's scolding his chauffeur: "Never try to get through the traffic, Norwood. The stricter it's run, the better for everybody's good. Everybody's good."

No. It was neither Jewish nor economic; it was Abby Hahl trying to escape an embarrassing situation, and Mrs. Brentwood in a hurry, and a subservient conductor and a subservient police-

RED DAMASK

man. Another conductor wouldn't have opened the door. Another officer might have threatened to arrest Mrs. Brentwood.

"I wish he had," thought Abby, wholesomely.

That evening Gilbert stayed in town for the Buyers' Club dinner.

At sunset Abby walked down to the Sound, across a path through the salt meadow, over stepping-stones that were dampish, even now at low tide. Gilbert condemned it and the mud flats beyond. But tonight they fascinated Abby.

She sat on a pile of driftwood and stared at them. Red streaks from the sky went purple on that slick wet clay. Distance smoothed small ridges and undulating humps, melting the crawling crustaceous life it heaved with, to a patent-leather plain, tannish gray where a few clouds reflected on it, white-silver in between. Abby got up and went close to it. Fiddler crabs burrowed weirdly in sunken holes. Bubbles spewed from chinks near cavities that sucked down hungrily. Ants scuttled after a worm, and one caught and carried it, wriggling. Flies buzzed, feasting on a dead clam. Gnats mewed and a mosquito shrilled softly, bound for prey. Ah, here was life unveiled, busy. . . .

"Hello, Witch of Endor! You look scared of your cauldron. Has a bat's wing snapped at you?" said Matthew Heron, coming up in back of her.

She turned and felt glad, bathed in a gush of graciousness that seemed to clear, to vivify everything. "It's so terribly alive." She laughed at her late shivers.

"Would you like it better, terribly dead?"

Matthew Heron loved to tease Abby. He loved to watch her amber irises go topaz when she was stirred. He loved two green specks just above the black deep pupils, studded there like emerald sparks. The dainty sweep of her fine eyelids pleased

RED DAMASK

him. Sometimes he thought that if he weren't in love with Abby he'd love her eyes. They had a special marked appeal for him. And this summer shamelessly she dressed to emphasize them. The side of him that loved to tease her chuckled inwardly. She'd be so shocked to know what she was doing!

Tonight she wore a rough polo coat, mustard-colored, over a dull green chiffon dress, high-necked, long-sleeved, trimmed severely with sapphire velvet bands. She had thrown a small black Spanish shawl over her tawny hair, witch-fashion, a vivid shawl on which scarlet butterflies chased bluebirds and white parrots through green vines. Every color she wore toned in tune. They rang on Matthew Heron's senses insistently, like bells. And what was left of his background rejoiced in her innocence; the rest of him resented it. However, he didn't think of Abby much, when he wasn't with her. He hadn't time. He had to think of work and responsibilities and continual financial worries. He put her to one side, a lovely, wonderful side, where dreams were, dreams of things he wanted to do and couldn't, where color was, and evanescent ecstasies from mass. He didn't question what he was going to do about her. Necessarily he had to question everything else. It was a luxury to drift.

And Abby went on about the mud flats. "Look at that crusty, crawly thing pouncing on that bug. There! He won't get it this time." Abby crunched the crawly thing. "Poor little bug."

"Poor little crawly thing. Poor little crawly thing's children. Waiting at home for nice roast bug for supper. Now they won't get any supper at all. Or any papa ever any more. Because an enormous witch with a perfectly gorgeous shawl and very beautiful eyes set herself against nature and scrunched him."

"Then nature's cruel."

"Abby, you shock me! I thought it was a family party with all the snakes and katydids obeying nice little rules."

RED DAMASK

"Grandfather used to say, 'Nature's way was the best way. That you got in trouble if you defied nature's way.'"

"I suspect if you hadn't done for that crawly thing's agreeing apparatus, it would agree with your grandfather. Perhaps its interpretation would be less patriarchal and a little closer to the truth."

"The survival of the fittest?"

"Sometimes. Not always. I imagine that fiddler crab suns himself in between foraging expeditions. And maybe some of its food is already dead. And so to the point. Foraging expeditions. I went to the house to find you people, and they told me Ware was in town and that you were here. I gathered that Nana disapproved of your being here. Anyway, I've come to tell you good-by."

"Good-by!" echoed Abby, blankly.

"Yes. Because a man on the outskirts of Washington chased a rabbit. A friend of this fellow Brentwood, a munitions millionaire, is building a house there on a time contract. His architect had a bad heart. Orders to take it easy. And just once he forgot about 'em. Exuberance of spirits, I suppose, poor chap. Chased a rabbit and that was the end of him. Keeled over on the spot. And Brentwood sent for me this morning."

"Brentwood," repeated Abby.

"Oh, Lucia hasn't cultivated this crowd in vain," said he, bitterly. "Abby, I'm damned sick of this eternal bootlicking. You know what I'd like to do? I'd like to get out of it all and teach youngsters to be so damned good at their jobs that the big firms would grab 'em and have to keep 'em no matter what they said, no matter what they did. An atelier like the one Cellini had. Where youngsters would start right with no standardized education to drag them off to non-essentials. And weed out the mediocre ones."

RED DAMASK

Just keep the kids that want to work and can work. The survival of the fittest." He smiled.

"I'm sorry you're going away." The emerald sparks glittered through startled tears.

"Are you? Really! Are you really sorry, Abby?" He stood in front of her, his own eyes, behind their glasses, great blue moons. For a second they hypnotized her and she simply stared into them. "Abby! I'd turn this job down, you know, and stay here. I haven't told Lucia yet. I'd . . ."

But she shrank away, horrified, terrified, panic-stricken. He sat down beside her and began to flip stones into the water. Then, irrationally, Abby was furious when she heard their motor coming down the long road. Nana and Jojo got out of it.

"I brought your rubbers, Mrs. Ware. Yes. And Jojo wanted to tell you good night," said Nana, severely.

Always at six o'clock she told Jojo good night.

"Mummy wide wiv us. And ve man." Jojo took his hand. "I had pwunes for thupper," she confided, proudly. "Nummy-num."

She was roly-poly, very cuddly, round-faced, auburn-haired and blue-eyed, with a complacent two-year-old charm. Matthew Heron picked her up and burrowed his face in her neck. She squealed delightedly.

"Not so much noise, Jojo," said Abby in a sharp, strained voice. "Come now. Isn't it your bedtime?"

They all rode up to the house together.

"I'm afraid Nana spoils Jojo," Abby thought. Jojo was so cocky. The world and prunes were hers. Why should it be hers?

The next day it rained, a steady, dripping, beating rain. Tempests blew. That old house creaked and shook with squalls that

RED DAMASK

tore at Abby's nerves. All day she braced herself against them, the respites worse, because then, tense, she waited for another.

She read *Peter Rabbit* to Jojo. Through Peter's perils—brought on by Peter's sins—she mused on the irony of Lucia's social efforts. Lucia had overreached herself. Much good the Willetts Garden Club would do her in Washington!

When Delia, the waitress, brought up the nursery tray, she complained only plaintively that the pantry was damp. She didn't hold Abby directly responsible for that equinoctial storm, as Nana did. And after lunch, while Abby in her weekly letter told Mother how nice Delia was, she thought how fortunate was this circumstance that automatically solved the problem of future relations with Lucia. They were leaving for Washington immediately. She wouldn't see them again. But such far-reaching results from a strange man's chasing a rabbit revolted her who wanted to live in a moral world. His fatal moment of exuberance; the Herons transplanted to Washington; her own little problem automatically solved. If chance twisted in like that, what was the use of human effort? Were you the captain of your soul, or its tail? In some vast pattern you couldn't see. Nature's logic, according to Mrs. North; nature's cruelty, according to the mud flats. Maybe there wasn't any pattern, nor any moral world. Maybe there was only a film of protoplasm, spurting energy. Why then all this effort to mold formless force into arbitrary dreams? Nobility, fineness, words based on petty folk ways that changed with time and place. So said books she'd been reading.

She finished her letter to Mother and sat at her desk, not thinking, listening to the storm, every muscle stiff.

For Abby's reaction from pretty words and noble dreams always was a long painful process of impetus and recoil. Those

RED DAMASK

pretty words and noble dreams flowed through her blood stream now. It plunged or slowed at their call.

The lights went out. Apologies to the servants had to be made. They grumbled and complained. The telephone went out. Morton, the chauffeur, had to go to the village for groceries. He said he wouldn't be responsible for what that muddy road did to the car.

Abby tried to read by candlelight. At four o'clock it was dusk.

"I hope you recognize how obvious is the inference that it is just the shocking nature of these passages which has led to their suppression." Did Freud mean the dreamer was shocked or was he shocked, and if he were taking a scientific attitude why should anything shock him? Oh, she couldn't read by such dim light! If only stupid people were anti-Semitic, and Lucia had shown prejudice, did that mean that Lucia was stupid? Lucia wasn't stupid. How hard it was to understand things!

But one thing she didn't try to understand. She didn't look back on her last interview with Matthew Heron. Instead, she who always had loved storms held her breath when lightning split the sky. Like a twisted rod of diamonds it glittered, and thunder cracked, clattered, roared. Abby covered her ears. Suppose it struck the house? She was powerless. There was nothing she could do. She ran to the nursery and grabbed Jojo. Oh, it felt good to hold her tight!

When Gilbert came home Abby ran to greet him in the hall. She loved his clean fresh smell of soap, his height, the way now she fitted in his arms, so safe. He meant everything sane and wholesome, a haven from this wild stuff she'd been reading; he meant the sort of life worth while; he was the father of her child, a clean upright member of the community, sharing her ideals.

"Why, Abby! Why this sudden affection? You haven't been

RED DAMASK

like this for a long time!" he said, tactlessly. He was so tactful with everyone but Abby.

Whereupon Abby stopped being "like this." She drew away.

"It's been an awful storm," she said.

"I thought you liked storms."

"A lot you know about what I like!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, nothing."

He wished he could understand Abby these days.

That night it rained, and the next day it rained.

"Mrs. Ware, I wish you'd just come and look at my pantry," whined Delia.

An inch of water stood on the floor.

"You can put on rubbers!" said Abby, brightly. "Wear them all day. Have you some? All right, Morton can get them when he goes for the groceries."

"I never waited on the table with rubbers on, madam."

"Well, it will be a new experience for you, Delia," said Abby, firmly. "New experiences make life interesting. After all, anybody can serve from a dry pantry. It takes adaptability . . . er . . . intelligence to make the best of things when they are a little primitive."

"Yes, ma'am?"

Abby warmed to her subject. "Yes. Why, Delia, this house is two hundred years old! George Washington once spent the night here. It has traditions. It means something to live in a place with history back of it! Why, that very pantry, one of his aides may have slept in it, his last night before going to battle."

Delia looked at it doubtfully.

"It will be something to tell your friends about! They're all

RED DAMASK

in ordinary country houses. The spirit of the Revolution clings to this one."

Delia's mother was Irish. She shivered happily. "Oh, Mrs. Ware, do you think, then, there's maybe a ghost?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," laughed Abby.

She went to the nursery.

"Look at that! Yes. Mrs. Ware, just look!" said Nana, grimly.

Through a leak in the bathroom ceiling a stream of water dripped into the bathtub.

"Well, now, wasn't it fortunate that the bathtub was there?" said Abby.

"How am I going to give Jojo her bath?"

"Why, that's easy! She can wear her bathing cap! Or better still, we can hang an umbrella up there and force it into a pail."

Abby ran for an umbrella, opened it, climbed on a chair and fastened it to a rusty nail.

"I had a friend with a family once in a damp house like this and the baby got pneumonia and died in twenty-four hours. Yes."

"I got an appeal from the associated charities in New York this morning, Nannie. Babies are dying there from the heat. Hundreds of them. And sick children lie on fire-escapes panting for air."

Nana looked interested.

"We get these storms on the Sound, but it's cool. Why, there's ten degrees difference in the temperature between here and New York. And look. Come here. I want to show you something." She led Nana to the window.

"Look at that view! You might be two hundred miles from the city! Why, it's fascinating to watch the Sound! It's never alike two hours at a time! And those trees, the way they bend

RED DAMASK

in the wind, against that sky! See. It looks almost purple over there."

Abby waxed eloquent, exultant. Her face flushed. She pointed out new beauties, lovely colors, lacy lines. She told fiery tales of the American Revolution, describing a battle fought near by. She was as exciting as Nana's favorite serial in *Tender Tales*.

"Well, now! Who'd have thought it?" said Nana, enthralled. "Yes. Come away from that pail, Jojo. Now, Mrs. Ware, why couldn't we let her sail her little boat in it?"

By the time Gilbert got home Abby had wilted; with no more situations to meet and to solve, no more power to spring.

"Gilbert, if we don't leave this terrible house right away, I'll go mad," she said, tensely, a little surprised at herself.

So was Gilbert. "I thought you loved this house! But I'm only too glad to get away, my dear! Where'll we go, though? It would be nice to go to the mountains, but it's too late to take a camp. And no decent hotel will take us! And the Leitha Beach house has been closed all summer. It would have to be aired and cleaned. . . ."

"That's easy," Abby brightened. "I'll send a wire to the caretaker to open all the windows as soon as the rain stops. And I'll go to New York and send scrubbing women down with minute directions. I'll get an army of them, and put two in each room, and they'll get through in one day! Then we'll take rooms at the Hilton for a day, and motor in in the morning, and Jojo can have her lunch there and rest, and we'll go out to Leitha Beach in the afternoon."

Here was violent action for two days, at any rate.

"I thought this place would get your goat eventually," said Gilbert.

"You mean on account of the prejudice? Oh, that doesn't bother me!" said Abby, airily.

RED DAMASK

Though she believed that husband and wife should tell each other everything, she hadn't told Gilbert about Lucia. It was her first conscious secret from him. At the thought of telling it her throat closed. There were some things you couldn't tell. However, she had told him the truth about anti-Semitism. Next to the storm, which was primitive, it seemed so petty. She had flung her impetus toward Matthew Heron into that storm, safely fearing it, instead of desires she wouldn't acknowledge, feelings she dared not know. Fiercely she planned flight, without knowing what she ran from.

However, she knew it wasn't anti-Semitism; vaguely, mystically, she knew it was more important.

Chapter Fifteen

IN NEW YORK that fall Abby's insomnia came back. "Maybe we ought to live in the country all the year round," said Gilbert, nobly. Everybody commuted in summer and cool nights were worth while, but leaving the store at five meant a daily rush for trains. In winter the store closed at six. Trains would have to be scurried for, and Gilbert hated scurrying. Snowy weather blocked country roads, and good doctors were inaccessible. Gilbert hated the thought of it, but he would make any sacrifice for Abby's health.

He admired self-sacrifice, and health was his dominant key. Now that he was used to Abby's ailment, he no longer considered it an assumption of his privilege, but sympathized because he had been ill himself. And Abby was still pretty, still dainty, still his fairy princess on a rarely approachable throne. Now that he was used to it, the rarity didn't bother him, but he couldn't get used to her cruelty. It hurt him every time she snapped at him, every time she was ironic, every time she belittled his successes.

But Abby wouldn't ask him to move to the country. She wasn't sure she wanted to. Dr. Hardenburg didn't order it, and, anyway, her insomnia wasn't so bad as it had been. It fluctuated.

Indeed, that winter Abby herself was fluctuating. She didn't know what she wanted or thought or felt. She joined a child-study society and ice skated madly. She ran the candy booth at the fair for the Jewish Charities Alliance, and served on a committee for removing statuary from Central Park. She worked for suffrage and endowed a musical protégé and bought an Italian Primitive. She took a course in psychology at Columbia and

RED DAMASK

read every war book she could find. She who had scorned Gauguin and Van Gogh, she who had raged at futurists and laughed at cubism went to a vorticist exhibition and liked it. "They've got at the heart of form!" said she, and was furious when Donna said she thought it was their livers.

Her friendship with Donna fluctuated. Donna said psychoanalysis was interesting and useful, but it wasn't a science yet; it was too arbitrary. "I came from a country where snakes are snakes," said Donna. Whereupon Abby antagonistically decided to be psychoanalyzed and changed her mind when she read another book about it.

This was Donna's winter for adjustments also.

A college friend died tragically. Lottie had whooping cough. Some temporary eye trouble kept Donna from her telescope. She couldn't read much, either. Dudley Kenheim was in Europe. Hunter Latimer had enlisted in the Canadian army. She had nobody to play with. She was fond of her mother. They had common memories and a similar sense of humor. But Karl and Dr. Hardenburg disliked each other articulately, though Dr. Hardenburg insisted on family life. Each engagement had to be avoided with special excuses. And Donna had enough family in West Forty-ninth street, anyway. Karl sulked over going. Why should he spend three dull hours and eat too much every Sunday night? He sulked when he didn't go, depression fuming from precepts outgrown and ingrown. And a stiff resistance to Donna's charm started fumes from her sensitive chink. Her vanity suffered. And you couldn't keep on laughing at absurdities that never varied. But she wouldn't encourage Karl's heresy to save herself superficial discomfort. Family life was the Hahl-Wendel religion, Sunday evenings their sacred high mass. But this was the first thing that Donna ever had done, continuously, against her own wishes, and she wasn't used to it, yet.

RED DAMASK

Otherwise she never would have told Abby that she was sick of dinners where food was a rite, not a pleasure; that their family affection had no more spontaneity than a motor truck and just as little grace. Every Sunday evening Abby resented what Donna was thinking, and thought it herself. Then every time Gilbert winced at something Abby said, Donna winced, hating to see pain. "I wouldn't want Gilbert for a husband or a lover, but he's made for a perfect friend," Donna told her mother. "He's too good to Abby. Poor dears! I reckon he's too good for her!"

Mother's sympathetic imagination was limited to her gluttony. Though Father had gout and high blood pressure, Mother didn't believe in extreme diets. Apple strudel and cheese cake and pâté de foie gras were enjoyments he shouldn't forego, especially when Carrie was hurt if her triumphs weren't appreciated. Carrie was the latest vestal virgin.

And Father needed some enjoyment. At the store, in February, he wondered whether they would have enough white satin sport skirts for summer, and worried lest they be overstocked. He feared Gilbert's plunge in summer furs. He refused an order for German uniforms, and then wished he hadn't. After all, America was neutral and business was business. So was the anti-German feeling, argued his common sense! Such indecision was unlike Father. But he was in physical pain. Likewise an acute anxiety to be consulted about everything covered a secret fear that he wasn't necessary any more. He had been proud of Gilbert; now he was jealous of him, jealous of other young men he had trained. He had a horror of growing old. And unable to forget himself in his usual activity, he was at Mother's mercy. "You know you're not so young any more," she babbled. "Father retired at your age." And, "Why should you go to the store today? They can get along just as well without you."

RED DAMASK

Tact wasn't a family virtue. Aunt Olive said, "*C'est l'Amérique*, Philip. Now in France you would want to retire and devote yourself to higher things—your family and friends. You would go to the galleries and to concerts. But in this country when you can't go to business any more . . ." Aunt Olive shrugged Gallically.

"Who said I couldn't go to business any more?" blazed Father.

Aunt Olive shrugged again, unusually aggressive these days, almost bursting with happiness she could not share. Uncle Stanley's gifts at last were recognized. It couldn't be spoken of until the contract was signed, except confidentially to Grandfather because he was endowing them, but Uncle Stanley was to edit a series of Russian writers, hitherto unknown. A translator had been found, and it was to take up four inches of that great shelf, the Neoteric Classics, leather-bound volumes, in which more or less distinguished *littérateurs* ordered an obedient public to read esoteric foreigners who would bore them. Uncle Stanley had only to write four two-page prefaces, to pay for the plates and the initial advertising, and his name would be in gold letters on each cover. Aunt Olive thought silver more interesting, but the binder told Uncle Stanley it didn't wear as well.

Uncle Stanley was happy also, welcome in Victor Fergusson's sanctum, the Victor Fergusson, America's non-commercial publisher, who wore a jade ring on his forefinger, whose imprint made the Neoteric Classics what they were. There Uncle Stanley met Daniel Shirley, author of *Canary Essence*, and other writers with names more famous than their books. There Uncle Stanley, nursing the literary taint he had caught from Aunt Olive, could talk "shop." There, in that glamorous circle, Uncle Stanley could belong. He hadn't belonged anywhere for years.

For years, also, he had accepted Grandfather's endowments,

RED DAMASK

until they seemed as natural as eggs for breakfast; equally unimportant in this new triumph.

Now at family dinners Uncle Stanley sat pensive, twirling his gray mustache, his thin nostrils dilating superiorly. Often he smiled secretly at Olive.

He maddened Uncle Cyrus.

One Sunday evening, after dinner, Uncle Cyrus joined the ladies to hear Aunt Olive deploring Dorothy Brockfield's marriage. "I was so surprised. After studying at the Academy in Rome, with such fine contacts. The people she met. And such a promising girl."

"Whom did she marry?" asked Grandfather.

"Herbert Blum."

"Blum. Horace Blum's son? In the leather business? I knew his father well. A fine young man, isn't he? Isn't he?"

"What's the matter with Herbert Blum?" asked Uncle Cyrus, testily.

"What's the matter with Herbert Blum?" echoed his wife.

Uncle Cyrus's knuckles whitened.

Aunt Olive beamed at her Stanley. "Oh, I don't suppose anything is the matter with Herbert Blum, exactly. *Chacun à son goût*. But he's nothing but a successful business man."

"Like your father!" said Cyrus.

Aunt Olive went over to Grandfather's chair and pressed his hand. "Not many like him!" said she, fondly.

"If your father hadn't been a successful business man, I wonder what would have become of you, Olive?" Uncle Cyrus's keen black eyes played scorn on Uncle Stanley.

Aunt Olive saw them. "Is that a reflection on Stanley?" she said, excitedly.

"You know him best. If the coat fits, put it on him."

"Now, now, children, don't get excited! Cyrus doesn't mean

RED DAMASK

anything. Have any of you seen the figures from the last Alliance report? The last Alliance . . . ”

That light blue room was too small, too crowded for Uncle Cyrus's stride. Every step brought him short against a Hahl, a Wendel, or a taboret. But for once his tongue went free.

“I'm sick of the way every little hanger-on in the art world in this country pretends to be a genius. Patronizing business men whose character and initiative and vision have built the nation!”

“Are you insinuating that Stanley is a hanger-on?” Aunt Olive's voice shook. Uncle Stanley didn't look pleased.

“Now, why should Uncle Cyrus be insinuating anything?” said Gilbert, reasonably. “Such discussions needn't be personal.”

The older generation, shouting, ignored Gilbert.

“Other men exert themselves, and make sacrifices for their wives and families!” thundered Cyrus.

“I'd like to see some of your writers and artists handle responsibilities for a change, and learn what work means,” said Father.

“I'd like to see some of your business men try to create anything,” shrilled Aunt Olive.

“Now, children, children!” said Grandfather, tears in his round eyes.

Mother, between shouts, discussed laundresses with Aunt Helen. Family arguments never bothered them. They paused automatically, as people living by elevated trains pause to let an express go by.

Nor did they bother Karl. Curiously, the idea of going or not going to family dinners upset him. When he got there, mentally he escaped. He sat fingering the fringe on a blue damask window curtain, pondering the best way to get permission to autopsy a child that had died in the hospital today. The clin-

RED DAMASK

icians said it was typhoid, but the pathologists had found no signs.

Abby was used to family arguments, but this one, sprayed with venom, woke her to a sort of violent lucidity. These people were tied by empty words and worn-out sentiments, which were all real to Grandfather, only, because he economically had founded the family. A family prospered when it worked together. Abby shrank from an economic interpretation of anything, but what other reason was there for tying people without spontaneous affection such as Rose Hahl Kenheim had for her parents, or Donna for her mother? Here in this room, where grouping was no longer necessary economically, they made a duty of affection. Affection couldn't be willed. No wonder it decayed! But, oh, the sight of this decay made Abby feel lost and lonely! This was earnest hate, not let-off steam. Another ideal smashed. She'd been suspecting this one for a long time, but it was her first-born! Anyway, she wouldn't catch Donna's eye, Donna, an outsider, who was seeing this "motor truck" go amok. Oh, if only they'd be less noisy! And the room was stuffy. And why did Mother have such a heavy pudding for dessert? Who could sleep after such food?

But Donna wasn't thinking about motor trucks. Comically aware of absurdity, she felt a sense of responsibility for this vehement atmosphere.

She took advantage of a pause. "Have you seen the Washington Square Players, Aunt Olive? I'm sure you'd enjoy them. They're so different from the commercial plays on Broadway."

"I have no interest in amateur theatricals," said Aunt Olive, shortly. She turned to Cyrus. "You needn't think I shall forget one word you've said, Cyrus Hardenburg!"

"I haven't asked you to forget one!"

RED DAMASK

Donna grimaced at Gilbert, who raised his eyebrows companionably.

Abby was annoyed.

At ten o'clock, Marta, the waitress, knocked on the door.

"Mr. and Mrs. Hardenburg's car is here." Against his principles, Uncle Cyrus had bought a car, since Aunt Helen had rheumatism.

Uncle Cyrus, as usual, shook hands with everyone in turn.

"Good night, Abby."

"Good night, Uncle Cyrus."

"Good night, Gilbert."

"Good night, Uncle Cyrus."

"Good night, Grandfather."

"Good night, Cyrus," said Grandfather, miserably.

"Good night, Donna."

He said good night to each in turn, as usual, and so did Aunt Helen. Uncle Stanley held out his hand. "Good night, Cyrus."

Cyrus ignored the hand.

"Good night, Erna," said he.

Aunt Helen, trembling, echoed him.

The next day Aunt Olive wrote a violent letter to Uncle Cyrus. She would never speak to him again until he apologized for the way he had treated Stanley. Uncle Cyrus wrote that he would never apologize to Stanley. For a long time he had felt she was wrong to influence Stanley to be an author. Obviously he wasn't fitted to be one. He had nothing to show for all these years when Grandfather had made it possible for them to have every luxury. Stanley artistically hadn't earned the right to be supported. They had kept Grandfather from doing fine things with his wealth for people who deserved and needed it. How could Grandfather

RED DAMASK

feel free to give as he should, with Olive and Stanley on his hands? Aunt Olive broke two pen points answering this.

How dare you reflect on Father's generosity? He is noted for doing more than his share! I hope you realize how your point of view shows up your character! Only a person with a monetary standpoint could judge artistic deserts by financial rewards! You haven't the vision to conceive of a family fortune like the great European fortunes! Why shouldn't Father rejoice at the privilege to use it to make family honors possible in other than commercial fields! You will soon know what I refer to! I am not at liberty to tell you now! But I don't mind telling you that only one thing could make you blind to all this! You must be jealous of what Father has done for us!

That last was Uncle Stanley's thought, but he begged her not to write it. While she sponged a special delivery stamp, he begged her not to send it. But he dared not tell her why. (She had to think him unworldly.) He foresaw a family row, with nobody on their side. And endowments, as well as eggs for breakfast, cease to seem natural when they seem liable to cease.

The next day was the anniversary of Grandmother Wendel's death. For twenty-five years, the family had called on that day to sympathize with Mother.

Abby was shown to Mother's sitting room at five o'clock, because Grandfather had Aunt Olive in the library.

"Grandfather has sent for Cyrus, too," said Mother. "He says with his being the head of the family for thirty-five years he won't have such a disagreement. They must be friendly. Why do you shake your head, Abby? You know they won't disregard Grandfather's wishes!"

And as Abby went downstairs, she paused, spell-bound on the stairs, unconscious, fascinated, like a spectator watching a street accident, watching through the library door.

RED DAMASK

The door was open, and she could see Aunt Olive on the red damask sofa, lowering a pretty flowered veil over a tear-stained face.

Cyrus Hardenburg stood erect, aloof, by the mantelpiece, his fierce mustachios, iron gray now, drooping. Only his eyes glittered, jet bulbs lighting tired gray skin, its lines grooved deep by frustration on frustration, perpetually denied.

Between them, short legs far apart on a silk Persian prayer rug, Grandfather towered. His chubby figure seemed no longer soft. The old-fashioned high black stock he wore on special occasions usually made his face look rounder, redder, a benign baby's face. His face triumphed over that high black stock, dignifying its roundness and its redness and its babyhood. Curiously, he seemed majestic, powerful, a human engine fused to fight for the juice it ran on.

"Olive is ready to be friendly now," he said. "I am an old man and may not live very long. Is it too much for me to ask of you, Cyrus, that for my sake you make friends with each other?"

Cyrus Hardenburg looked at Olive and at her elaborate lace handkerchief. His hard lips curled. But habitually he gave up the thing he wanted, the thing being now this satisfying quarrel. Moreover, Grandfather was compelling, in this danger to his life's ideal. Force flowed from its intensity.

"Since you put it that way, I cannot refuse," said Cyrus Hardenburg, formally.

Abby, unseen, ran down the stairs.

It was unfair for Grandfather to put it that way, so that Cyrus Hardenburg couldn't refuse! And yet when you cared as much as Grandfather cared for family solidarity, anything seemed fair. Sharply, acutely, Abby envied Grandfather the thrilling certainty that he was significant to something he considered significant in

RED DAMASK

itself; that something outside mattered more than he did. Both she missed. She loved Jojo. Jojo's tears over a cut finger could drip on her heart like sparks. But Jojo's cut fingers were rare, and then iodine was best. Sedate, cocky little Jojo rarely needed her. Oh, she was still the gnat's traffic policeman at nineteen East Fiftieth street. Domestic blockades were annoying, but not paramount as they were to Mother. Why, there was Mother's significance! What if it were petty? It was something she strung her life on! Abby had nothing. Gilbert. When she didn't feel implacably, mysteriously resentful toward Gilbert she was rather fond of him. Time and habit and common interests were welding a relationship that didn't fit any of her formulas. It was neither a grand passion nor a grand hate. Why, there was grandeur in Grandfather's determination to keep the family whole! Where could she find grandeur?

The next Sunday evening Uncle Stanley's editorship was announced and the family crowed like a barnyard in the morning. Uncle Cyrus drank the toasts, his face stern, somber, a martyr to a consecrated cause.

"A martyr to a vacuum!" thought Abby. (And calling it names didn't free you from it.)

Determined to be honest, she went to lunch with Donna and told her she was right about the family.

"I'm not entirely right!" said Donna. "Nobody ever is. I think your mother and Aunt Helen are devoted to each other; they're awfully congenial. But I wonder if you've noticed one little *nuance* that almost makes Sunday evenings worth while? Never, since that happy time when Aunt Olive sweetly suggested that Father couldn't go to business any more has he spoken to her! I've watched him. Of course he doesn't talk

RED DAMASK

much, anyway, so nobody notices it. He hasn't been a bit dramatic about it. I'm sure she doesn't know. When everybody stands up and shakes hands and says 'Good night,' like marionettes acting 'What the well-dressed family shall do,' he just happens to be out of the room. Murmurs something about going to the telephone. Or he must speak to Otto. All very quiet and efficient and business-like. The first two times I thought it was a coincidence."

"Why, you seem to get pleasure out of it!"

"Uh-huh. It's fun to watch anything happening."

"But life isn't just a play!"

"What is it?"

"I don't know."

"Why, Abby, you're growing up!"

"But, Donna, think of Grandfather, living in the midst of a lie. It's bad enough to have conformity covering frictions, but to have him think there's conformity where there isn't . . ."

"He's being deceived. Don't you think you ought to tell him about it?"

"I couldn't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Hurt him like that? Oh, I couldn't!"

"Hallelujah! Sinner, come to glory! Hurrah for consequences!"

"Donna, all my ideas are higgledy-piggledy these days. I hate the thought of individualism. Selfishness. Not thinking of others. And yet when I try to analyze any special case, I get all mixed up."

"You would. If you ever found a completely unselfish person he'd be as reckless as an honest man. You can't mention anybody who has ever benefited the world at large, who hasn't done

RED DAMASK

it incidentally. A sort of side issue from interest in the thing in itself or in advancing himself! Take our old friend Mrs. Conrad. She's partly responsible for the spread of night schools and vocational training, and she did it for nobody but Sarah Conrad. You know that!"

"How about Pasteur? Somebody important!"

"Br'er Rabbit, don't throw me in the brier patch. His first scientific interest was in the shape of crystals. Absolutely abstract. He neglected everything to investigate it. If he got interested in a problem, nobody could tear him away. And when he solved it, he got a profound thrill out of each little honor. Lord! how he loved his medals! And I doubt if that was all he loved. He died of . . ."

"How about Lincoln?" interrupted Abby.

"Well, he was thinking a little more of his clients, the canal people, and through them of his legal future, when he opposed a transcontinental railway, than he was of the development of this grand and glorious country!"

"Do you just look up disillusioning facts about people?"

"No, but I love to get all the facts. The disillusion follows. But not for me. I get a big thrill out of Pasteur's work, and Lincoln's, too. Great men don't have to be idols. They couldn't be great if they were! Enormous vitality rarely stays put in abstract virtues."

"What do you believe in, Donna?"

"Caramel pie, right now. Isn't it good!"

Obviously she enjoyed that caramel pie, as she enjoyed all her senses, as unashamed as some hardy shrub might be, of gulping sun and air. In fact, that morning she had motored to Bronx Park and, wrapped up on a bench, she had watched clouds go by, and shadows on the trees, enjoying them. The day before

RED DAMASK

she went to Staten Island, for the trip, and discussed wives with a longshoreman going over on the boat, and husbands with a laundress, coming back. She liked to watch people's wheels go round. Too social to go to parties where people drugged with small talk, she looked for intimate twosomes, anywhere.

"I used to think you were too flippant, Donna," sighed Abby. "Now I think you're lucky to be flippant. It must be wonderful!"

Donna was lucky. She could adjust.

She had trouble with her eyes.

She flirted with her oculist.

That summer Abby found grandeur.

In 1916, one year before America joined the Allies, Abby got into the war. And she got into it because a Mrs. Sidney Unterborg wanted to get into the best Jewish society.

Emma Unterborg had been a jeweler's stenographer in Maiden Lane. Her husband was a bookkeeper. When he started a bond business she became his stenographer, his secretary, as the business grew. They married one Columbus Day, it being a holiday. Ten years later that little bond business merged with Rothschild, Korn & Company, changing Rothschild, Korn & Company's reputation for stodgy reliability to brilliant (and occasionally questionable) activity. Meanwhile Mrs. Unterborg had raised her family. Social position came next. But the Kenheims and the Brockfields and the Hahls and Wendels, her heavenly hosts, were unaware of this imperative. They didn't want her golden harp in their celestial orchestra, and they were too secure for Sidney Unterborg's financial pressure. They snubbed Emma Unterborg as sincerely as Willetts snubbed the Wares. But Emma Unterborg was shrewder and more eager.

RED DAMASK

Within a year she organized a stocking factory for Allied soldiers in an abandoned swimming club at Leitha Beach. Elinor Riemann Hardenburg furnished interested friends.

"Where did you meet this Mrs. Unterborg, Elinor?" asked Abby's Aunt Aurelia.

"It was the funniest coincidence!" said Elinor. "I was crazy for a piece of old Honiton for my lace collection. And this Mrs. Unterborg called me up one day and said she had duplicates. Miss Helen had told her I wanted it. And, my dear, the most wonderful bargain! Then she told me of a wonderful place down on Thirty-fifth street and said she'd take me there. We got to talking. One thing led to another. She told me about a stocking factory a friend of hers was running in Cincinnati for the soldiers. And there you are. Now, Mrs. Hahl, how much time can you give us?"

But it wasn't coincidence. There were few coincidences in Emma Unterborg's life. She tried fifteen manicurists until she found Miss Helen, who polished the best nails in the gilded ghetto, and collected all its news. Emma Unterborg knew the value of tips; both kinds. Miss Helen told her about Mrs. Henry Kenheim's beautiful home, her five lovely children; about Mrs. Gilbert Ware's being such a fine woman. "Always thinking of others. But that sister-in-law of hers is queer, I tell my friend, with all that money, to live in that funny apartment on the East Side, and right up near the roof. She studies the stars, they say."

Mrs. Unterborg had decided on hobbies as her entering wedge. But astronomy couldn't be crammed. Then Miss Helen told her the next week that Mrs. Karl Hahl didn't care for any of the family's friends, and it certainly was funny when she came from some little town down South. "To give herself such airs. I

RED DAMASK

tell my friend, if that crowd isn't good enough for her, what does she want?"

Mrs. Unterborg didn't know. "Now that Mrs. Max Hardenburg she collects lace, you know. They say she's as good as an expert. But every spring she has a nervous breakdown. I tell my friend, that Mrs. Hardenburg, with her being one of those wiry women, all over the place in no time, and her children in school, she needs something to do."

"That will do, Miss Helen," said Emma Unterborg, hurriedly, with a double meaning.

"No polish today?"

It was May. There wasn't too much time. Emma Unterborg spent three days in the public library learning about old lace, and four days looking up dealers.

So day after day, through storm and heat and family anniversaries, Abby ran a knitting machine in that pavilion by the sea. Rapt she was, like some grave nun in her white coif with its blood-red cross.

Round, and around, and round, she turned her crank, eyes fixed on a gray revolving cylinder, seeing black* dusk on a torn field, earth spewed forth. . . . Limbs. . . . Blood. . . . Terror. . . .

Passionately accurate, as a nun telling beads with her heart in heaven, she never missed any fault in the yarn. Knots small enough to slip through the needle were large enough to make Abby rip a whole sock.

Nothing should fret a noble knight! Ah, what a privilege to ease his march! Even if hers were a petty part, it was a part in this glorious cause! Round and around and round. . . . For civilization against beastliness. To save the world from Huns out of hell!

RED DAMASK

"Abby, come home for lunch with me today. I don't think you ought to stay here and eat sandwiches each noon," said Rose Hahl Kenheim.

Round and around and round. Cold scrunching mud in the trenches. . . . Smells. . . . Vermin crawling. . . . Brave laughter. . . . Crusaders in khaki. . . . Strong prime of manhood. . . .

"Abby! Don't you hear me?"

"Uh? Er. . . . what is it?" said Abby, impatiently. "Oh, about lunch?" How funny, she must have heard without knowing she heard. "Sorry, Rose. I'd rather carry on."

Round and around and round. Strong prime of manhood at Armageddon. . . . Lives flung out for a deathless cause. . . . big enough to justify them . . . bigger than life!

A rôle in a world cataclysm, absorbed personal problems, drowning fears and smothering worries. Abby slept deeply now, the sleep of physical fatigue, the just sleep of union with the infinite.

On Sundays often Abby's exaltation waned.

Occasional marital caresses, dutifully endured with pointed finger nails surreptitiously mauling soft palms, were followed by irritations that destroyed any pleasure Gilbert could have had from such haughty acquiescence. But Gilbert didn't expect much. His gift for adjustment made him idealize and spiritualize sex, degrading it to the level of a physical katharsis. He called it an expression of man's animal nature, which women were too fine to share, a necessary favor that wives, reverently, apologetically, could be asked for. This also had been his father's view.

The irritations were harder to adjust.

Usually they focused on the Sunday papers. Gilbert, stubbornly neutral in 1916, talked about peace without victory and

RED DAMASK

economic causes. Grandfather, born in Nuremberg, properly could distinguish between South and Pan-Germans. Gilbert had no right to do likewise. He read pseudo-neutral editorials from the *Daily Express*, and Abby called them pro-German, and barked back with jingoistic articles from the *New York Courier*. Then Captain Koenig brought the *Deutschland*, the first transatlantic submarine freighter, across a warring sea. Even the *Courier* cheered it, momentarily won by sheer physical audacity.

Abby swallowed the thrill in her throat.

"It's only a blockade runner," sneered she. "I suppose you're excited because they brought a fresh supply of aspirin."

In August, Mother and Father left for a sight-seeing trip in California, too strenuous for Grandfather. He came to stay with Abby at Leitha Beach.

He brought his car, his chauffeur and Otto, and his habits. He never used a towel twice. Two laundresses left. Otto was called a useful man because Grandfather disapproved of valets, but he had to have an early supper so that he could help Grandfather dress for dinner. The cook sulked. Grandfather disliked doilies. Tablecloths had to be used. He disliked seeing Abby smoke. She stopped it. He fidgeted over the broad way her friends talked and delivered sententious homilies which made them fidget.

Every evening Gilbert had to rehash the business day. Father couldn't get enough of the store and cheerfully talked it, but Gilbert prided himself on leaving it in Thirty-sixth street at closing time.

Jojo couldn't come down for Sunday breakfast, her one meal out of the nursery. Grandfather's cigars made her cough. She had to be hushed over her supper. Grandfather, near by, took his rest then.

RED DAMASK

The day he came he had a cinder in his eye. Gilbert ran for boric solution and an eyeglass. Abby rolled his lids over a pencil. He groaned.

"Hadn't I better phone for a doctor?" said Gilbert.

"I don't care what he's got in his eye!" said Jojo, sweetly. "I want what's in his pocket." Always Grandfather had had milk chocolate in his pocket for Jojo.

Gilbert said Jojo was only three years old. Abby forgot about vortexes and vacuums and said Jojo shouldn't have dessert for supper nor milk chocolate from Grandfather ever again. "Nobody loves selfish little girls!"

Then Uncle Lewis sent Jojo a Scotch terrier.

"Abby, you must send that dog away. I don't like dogs. Don't like dogs," said Grandfather, and Jojo heard him say it, and she lost her dog.

But when she walked on a twelve-inch ledge near the porch, Grandfather paled. She found several ledges to walk on. When she jumped down two steps he nervously dashed for her. She found new steps to jump from.

Abby didn't want Jojo to be physically timid. All this submission to Grandfather was against Abby's principles, anyway—principles curiously subdued by emotions founded on early training. However, she came to two conclusions. (Incorrigibly Abby came to conclusions.) Should either Father or Mother ever want to live with her permanently, she'd resist if it killed her. Jojo must not be sacrificed to the older generation. This summer wouldn't hurt her. Indeed, Jojo was spoiled. She got things too easily. (Abby got them so hard, if she got them.) And Gilbert took Jojo's side. (He was an adored and adorable father to Jojo.)

Abby's child-study society stressed the trivial in early years.

RED DAMASK

So did Freud. Both said all only children were spoiled. Jojo shouldn't be an only child.

Blindly, desperately, Abby shrank from another pregnancy. Loudly she called herself a physical coward, blind to primitive recoils from bearing Gilbert's child, deaf to cries against mechanical conception. For Abby didn't dwell much on being out of love with Gilbert. It made her position equivocal. She wanted it heroic.

In that pavilion by the sea it was heroic. Round and around and round went that gray yarn cylinder. . . . Suppose Nana fought the war with Otto on the back stairs! Suppose Grandfather and Jojo skirmished on the front porch, and smothered bombs tore her own heart. . . . "Yes, Mrs. Unterborg, this lot is all finished. Oh, I'd rather start a new one today!" Round and around and round. . . . That old house on Atlantic Avenue was only a gnat sector. Here was a world to be saved!

Donna and Karl, down from Maine, brought Lottie for the last week-end in September.

"Don't you think you ought to have another child?" Abby asked Donna.

"Why?"

"Lottie ought to have companionship."

"She has. She has lots of friends. And if she isn't attractive to them, they'd drop her, which keeps her much more on her toes than brothers and sisters would. They couldn't drop her. They could just not be companionable. You know. The way you and Karl were."

Abby disregarded this. "But isn't it your duty to have another child?"

"Duty to whom?"

"Why . . . to the State."

RED DAMASK

"Listen to the Prussian! This war came from German idealism just like yours. (Only some of it was in France, too!) The State first! To hell with human interest. What is the State? Here and now, I mean. Those politicians in Washington? I see myself being an invalid for another four years for a strange child I mightn't like, or dying to produce a new constituent for a lot of pork-snatching phonographs! Like our Senator Brock, who's always getting big post offices for little towns. All he has to do is to grind out a few *clichés*, sob stuff about home and mother. Pick your 'State' to pieces and see what you've got! Why . . ."

Abby interrupted.

"But, Donna, it isn't right for the poor to have large families and the rich to be selfish."

"Why?"

"Isn't the family the foundation of civilization?"

"Aren't you hard on the family, with Grandfather in the house, too? If I were a Kaiser, I'd give more and better birth control to the poor. Mustn't take away their only pleasure. And I'd go through the Caraway Country Club with a sterilizing apparatus, and turn it on the Gentile 'Four Hundred,' too. Sparing some in each crowd. You can't generalize. But it kind of looks like the rich go mighty damned decadent mighty damned quick, in this country. The intelligentsia, too! As for your crowd, every family in it has at least one defective. How useful was Aunt Sophie's service to the State when she brought forth William? Or to him, poor devil!"

"Donna, how can you!"

"That brother of Mr. David Brockfield has spent most of his time in sanitariums. One of the Kenheims has been put away. And Elinor Hardenburg's got two queer youngsters and a nervous breakdown every year. She's running right now on that Mrs.

RED DAMASK

Unterborg's domination. Watch her snap when Lady Macbeth has a chance at a Kenheim and kicks her down the ladder. All your crowd snap in strains because they try to play safe and avoid 'em. No guts. Always running from risks. Then sickness comes along and all their little fears creep out of little caves where proper exercise and good food and health have hidden them. Or one of their smug little ideals turns sour. A fine chance they have to adjust to reality, if it's unpleasant! They go to a sanitarium instead. And some of them were born with tools for struggle, and rust inside. Intelligent, too. More interested in ideas than most Gentiles in the same economic group. But right now I think I'd rather have Lottie marry a peasant from Idaho than one of your satin-covered jellyfish. Whew, I'm out of breath!"

"None of those defectives on Randall's Island have any satin coverings!"

"True!" Donna laughed. "That's the trouble with facts. You can find 'em to fit any argument. What I wonder is, why we always argify! I reckon it's because you have to intellectualize everything you do and I'm a sort of foil to bring it out. If I ever get to be a fine woman, I suppose that would end our friendship. It isn't likely to happen, though."

"What would happen to the country's population if everybody felt as you do?"

"Got to get it out of your system, haven't you, honey? Well, everybody never feels as anybody does about anything. Though it might be a good thing in this case. There are too many people in this world, anyway! People, people, people, crowds wherever you go! Look at the Post Road on Sundays or lower Fifth Avenue at noontime, and weep over birth control if you can! If I weren't so darned lazy I'd work with that birth-control bunch. Lord! all over the country little towns are grow-

RED DAMASK

ing into cities. What of it? What's the virtue in breeding crowds? Of course there'd be fewer automobiles and silk stockings and less chewing gum and poverty . . ."

"And in case of war . . ."

"Not so many soldiers. Reckon it'd be pretty careful about keeping out of war. It wasn't under-population that stimulated Germany!"

"Doesn't Karl want a son?"

"Sure, he does! It's a well-known form of male vanity. But nobody has everything he wants. Why should he? He gets more than most people. The bated breath with which you say, 'Doesn't Karl want a son?' makes me feel feministic. As if he had the choice! I earn my keep as far as Karl's concerned, in many ways. The truth is, Abby Hahl, you're trying to make me do what you think you ought to! I'm just beginning to feel human after having Lottie. I'm not crazy about physical cowardice, but I'm not crazy about having virtues *per se*, either. Mind you, I'd do every twinge over again for Lottie. But not for a perfect stranger. I'd rather kiss the back of Lottie's neck than eat, and I've got a lot of respect for her sometimes, if she is as reactionary as an English butler, bless her heart! But another time we might duplicate Uncle George, and what would be the use of another judge of wines with the country going prohibition? No. The only excuse for having a child is wanting it."

"That's just selfish."

"Abby, I met a serious-minded Englishman in London. Was in the first hundred thousand. Wounded. Most of his friends killed. Married a lovely girl. They both love children and have adopted two war orphans. But he said: 'I don't mind taking a life. Giving one daunts me. I wouldn't be selfish enough to bring a human being into this world.' There's another noble attitude. Think on it!"

Chapter Sixteen

ABBY'S second child, a boy, was born in April, 1917, and she was too ill for several weeks to know that Grandfather died peacefully in his sleep and that America had gone into the war.

"You mustn't consider us!" Abby told Gilbert when the nurse left them alone together.

"Well, whom should I consider?" said Gilbert, shakily, because Abby looked so weak and pale.

Abby gazed at him. "Do I have to tell you? Your country, Gilbert."

"Oh, that! Yes. Didn't I tell you? Mrs. Ware, let me introduce you to your husband, Lieutenant Gilbert Ware, Textile Expert, Ordnance Department, Washington. Will you keep house there for me, young lady? We're to go as soon as you're better."

Abby turned away. She wasn't strong enough to say what she thought. But when Gilbert left she touched the small bundle beside her. "You'll be a man, darling, won't you?" But Philip Hahl the third only screwed up a reddish-brown skin and whimpered faintly. He was a very puny Philip Hahl.

Quickly Abby recovered her strength. There was work for her to do! She had to do her part and Gilbert's, his desk job being no real part in a war.

On the 30th of August, the day before she left for Washington, she stood on Fifth Avenue, near the reviewing stand at the public library, watching the Twenty-seventh Division march by.

RED DAMASK

Over there!
Over there!
The Yanks are coming,
The Yanks are coming,
And we won't come back
Till it's over over there!

It caught her like an incantation, shaking her into its rhythm.

Over there!
Over there!

She was open to every appeal. Flags from windows fluttered, white stars and red stripes, rippling through her heart. Far up that wedge of street and down it, from every wall on wall of white stone, brown stone, gray stone, they flew like captured colored birds. She quivered with the crowd, open to its appeal, its quivering, vibrant, intolerable appeal. Every nerve echoed its cheering; every muscle tensed with its tears; and she was denied its natural outlet. Her training wouldn't let her cheer and cry with a crowd. But her body knew its surges; its tears, swelled, closed up in her throat.

Over there!
Over there!

Twenty-five thousand men, in rows, like fine young trees, to be cut down, that she and hers might live!

The Yanks are coming!
The Yanks are coming!

One-two-three!
Four-five-six!
Seven-eight-nine!

Oh, she couldn't count them! Young flesh and blood in khaki, giving itself for her and hers!

RED DAMASK

And we won't come back
Till it's over over there!

Quiet. Tramp. Tramp. Such quiet that you could hear a cough across the street and a child whine, "Moth-er!" Quiet. Tramp. Tramp. Tramp. Quiet. Quiet. Quiet. Halt!

"Forwa-ard, march!"

Oh, she wanted to do something for them, for them all, for each one! She had to do something, for each one! She'd like to cut herself in small pieces—anything to make herself enough for them all! There wouldn't be enough. Agony. There must be enough! She couldn't do enough. She ached to do enough! She felt a separate personal, acute obligation to each one.

One-two-three!

Four-five-six!

Seven-eight-nine!

Were there twenty-one in those rows or twenty-four? Khaki blurred in the sun. Bits of steel glittering. She couldn't see for tears.

A woman next to her had a paper open at Wilson's last note.

Abby looked at it. Its phrases soared through her like magic, symmetrical, in tune:

Over there!
To deliver free peoples
from the menace—
Over there!

It was all of a piece; words pressing on senses; thoughts stirring to action; hypnotic beat of a glorified tom-tom.

Ir-responsible gov-ernment. . . .
Having secretly planned to dominate the world . . .
Over there!

RED DAMASK

It swelled majestically.

Without regard for the sacred obligation of treaty
or long-established practices,
and long-established principles,
of international action and honor . . .

The Yanks are coming,
And we won't come back,
Till it's over over there!

Like fine young trees they were, to be cut down!
She couldn't bear it. Ah, those barbarians, that brutal Prussian
beast!

Which chose its own time for the war;
delivered its blow fiercely and suddenly;
stopped at no barrier of law or of mercy;
swept a whole continent within the tide of blood—

If only she could go with them. So gladly would she die!

Swept a whole continent within the tide of blood;
Not the blood of soldiers only,
but the blood of innocent women and children;
also of the helpless poor;
And now stands balked, but not defeated,
the enemy of four-fifths of the world.

Quiet again. Tramp. Tramp. Tramp. She couldn't bear it.
She would scream. Her throat would burst!

"Forwa-ard, march!"

If only she could cut herself in small pieces. Small pieces.
Many pieces. But it wouldn't be enough to go round. It wouldn't
be enough to go round.

And we won't come back
Till it's over over there!

RED DAMASK

When she got home, Gilbert said: "Abby, you shouldn't have stood in all that crowd. I want you to be feeling fine when you get to Washington. In these few weeks I've been there, I've made some very interesting contacts. Major Mayberry—such a fine man in the Ordnance Department—has asked us to a dinner on Wednesday evening."

"Ah-hah, Hah-hah-hah-haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" laughed Abby, screaming, in her first and last hysterics.

No longer neutral with his country at war, Gilbert was ideal in a military régime. He obeyed orders, never questioning them. He was dependable, responsible, earnest about any detail. He toiled twelve hours a day without complaint, sustained by some patriotic exaltation, a climate that agreed with him, and the appreciation of his superiors.

His exaltation was not blind like Abby's. He discounted the atrocity stories she blazed over; he didn't expect the war to purify the world. America having gone into the war to prevent Germany's winning—which would have been a calamity—he was ready to follow his government, the authorities, through every mile of red tape in his department. His patriotism, like his affections, was simple.

It had its rewards. War-time Washington was too anti-German to be anti-Semitic, especially since Gilbert's name was as unobjectionable as his talent for ordering a dinner. Majors and colonels dined with him at restaurants, however, for Abby refused to entertain, that first year in Washington, so soon after Grandfather's death, whatever Gilbert said about morale.

In fact, that first year she would have been too tired at night to entertain.

She worked in a lunch room that several officers' wives ran for officers. Most of the women worked on alternate days. Abby

RED DAMASK

worked every day. She ordered supplies. She was cashier when the cashier didn't come, and waitress sometimes. Sometimes she even washed dishes. "Mrs. Ware will do it," said anybody when somebody failed. Nothing was too menial, nothing too tedious, to be Abby's "bit."

Meanwhile, in his big nursery in the shabby, elaborate house they had taken on Connecticut Avenue, little Phil whimpered and ailed. His mother's milk hadn't suited him. Neither did Dr. Giles's formula. The Washington doctor changed from baby food to baby food, and Abby changed from doctor to doctor. She had perfect confidence in Nana, who had taken such wonderful care of Jojo. Since she had to be away from home all day, she was glad she had some one tried and trusted for Philip. It never occurred to her that it was ominous for Phil to cry for her and smile with her and push his Nana away. Abby adored the boy's clinging to her. So she had dreamed her boy would cling.

One Sunday morning while Abby was alone with him, he reached for a bunny rabbit at the side of his crib. At seven months he was a waxen, bony baby, with scanty ash-brown hair, and Abby's yellow eyes, overbright in his heart-shaped face. And such a funny reach he had, left hand pushing his right wrist, a trick that tickled Abby. But this time two fingers flipped against the crib.

He cried. Abby seized the fingers, kissing them, crooning over them. How he crowed then! His happy, inarticulate little noises stirred Abby to tenderness too deep for tears. "I'll eat you up!"

The next day he flipped his fingers against the side of the crib and cried. His left hand pushed his right wrist, holding

RED DAMASK

fingers out to be kissed. But Nana was there and Abby wasn't and Jojo danced into the room.

"My Nannie! My Nannie-Nannie-Noo!"

Nana picked her up and hugged her, whispering.

"Ooh-lah! Ooooo-lah! Oo-lah! O-ah-oah-oah! Ahhhhhahaha-O!" screamed Phil.

Nana went to him. "Stop that! You naughty, naughty boy! I'll declare I never had such a baby! It's enough to fair discourage one!" she scolded.

He stopped for breath, his yellow eyes wide open, wistful, then screwed up again in infantile despair.

"Let him cry it out," said Nana. "His mother spoils him." But she didn't leave it at that. She went on scolding him, her voice as harsh as blows. She wouldn't slap him. Abby had read all the books on child training and their rules were obeyed.

There were no rules against hate.

Philip was no credit to Nana, whose babies always thrived. Because of him, Nana had to see her darling in another's hands. Jojo had a governess, Miss Kerrinault, half French. Nana expected Miss Kerrinault to neglect Jojo, and then she'd show her a thing or two! But Miss Kerrinault didn't neglect Jojo, which was worse. For Nana had to watch Jojo, fickle, happy little Jojo, getting fond of Miss Kerrinault. Terrified lest she get too fond, Nana schemed and worked to win her back, helpless while Miss Kerrinault took her to Rock Creek Park and the Zoo. Nana had to keep the baby's pram in the yard, away from the dust of the streets. Oh, he was such a sickly failure of a baby! And the family called Miss Kerrinault Miss, and she and Jojo had lunch in state in the dining room. Nana had trays alone. Hating Miss Kerrinault, Nana had to share the nursery sitting room with her. Nana liked bright lights. Miss Kerrinault wanted them dim. Nana liked open windows. Miss Kerrinault

RED DAMASK

wanted them shut. Miss Kerrinault had neuralgia and Nana had to hear about it from morning to night, and about Miss Kerrinault's brother's wife and what Miss Kerrinault said to her when they quarreled. Sometimes Miss Kerrinault patronized Nana, calling her a "nursery maid," laughing at her *Tender Tales*. Miss Kerrinault read the *Current Digest*, and flung French phrases at Nana, and talked about the opera. "Of course you wouldn't understand," she'd say. And Nana wouldn't leave. Not she! Leave her darling to that woman! Not much. Where there was French blood . . . A friend had told her a tale or two! Things weren't always all right when they seemed all right. But she'd watch. She'd see that no harm came to her Jojo!

As for the baby, she never neglected him, manually. But she hated him, hating herself for hating him, and hating him for loving his mother.

Dr. Giles would have known how bad hate was for a sensitive baby with a weak digestion, but he was five hours away. Abby never was that close. She soared, in her exaltation, impatient of nips in a gnat sector. Gilbert noticed that Nana was jealous of Miss Kerrinault. "What of it?" said Abby. "Those little squabbles never amount to anything." Still susceptible to nevers and evers, Abby soared above this one.

She was winning a war!

Sometimes Abby wondered whether the Herons had stayed in Washington, and yet when Gilbert told her he had met Mike Heron she was surprised. Surely it was surprise that sent breath swiftly from lungs to heart and thence to throat! And Gilbert wondered mildly that Abby didn't want to ask them for dinner.

In October, 1918, the Wares were entertaining again. Even a general had dined in that big old house on Connecticut Avenue. Gilbert, a major now, and proud of it (though Abby shrugged

RED DAMASK

at desk-won glories), was loyal enough to ask the Herons, hoping they wouldn't come. Heron's extreme views and blunt manner might offend their new friends. So Abby must have figured. But such caution was unlike her.

In fact, Abby was figuring how strange it was that Matthew Heron had never dropped in at their lunch room. It being centrally located, everybody dropped in sooner or later, and Gilbert had said she was there.

And yet, one week later, when he did drop in, again she was surprised.

She heard his voice before she saw him. "Well, here's Sister Abby! Fighting the war, as usual!"

She was so surprised that she got up from her chair at the cash register, almost upsetting it, and, absurdly, saw herself in a mirror and was glad her uniform suited her.

His uniform suited him, too. Usually his clothes, badly tailored, seldom pressed, hung on him, shapeless. But his khaki was trim. He looked lean and wiry, his eyes brilliant, his jaw line spare and hard.

"Somebody's got to fight the war," Abby answered him, a little solemnly, though the newspapers were saying that Germany's military might at last was beginning to crumble. "Are you going over?" she asked.

"Not if I can help it." He leaned close to her cage to whisper. "Come and sit with me while I have lunch. This young lady wants to relieve you, anyway."

They found a table in the corner, a tiny table for two.

Suddenly Abby felt alive, jolly, relaxed, deliciously excited, as if she'd had rye whisky, the one drink that affected her. (The one drink she always refused.)

"Abby, I must say this war agrees with you. You look like a Conrad School girl again. Or a nun. No! Carmen in a blue

RED DAMASK

veil. Prussian blue! Abby, has the American Defense Society seen you?"

Abby laughed. "What are you doing now?"

"Measuring boards to be loaded in a boat that won't hold 'em. A noble work."

"Oh, why don't you get into the fight?"

"Several reasons. The least is a wife and two children to support. Others are, not wanting to get killed or maimed. And I don't think this is a very nice war, anyway."

"But if it ends war and makes the world safe for democracy?"

"You would fall for that stuff! I'm not even sure democracy would be safe. And if it were, what then?"

"How dare you say such things!"

"I dare say anything—to you." His eyes, blazing, mocked her.

Abby looked around uneasily. Nobody was noticing them. Miss Mayberry, who had replaced her, had heard Heron call her "Sister Abby." "Isn't it nice for Mrs. Ware's brother to surprise her like that?" she told Colonel Hurley's wife.

"Of course you couldn't appreciate Wilson's idealism. But do you want Germany to come over and take this country?" asked Abby.

"Not especially. But I don't think they're as invincible as you do."

"If everybody felt your way, they wouldn't need be invincible. They could just saunter in and take over the capital."

"True. But everybody doesn't. So many people can let out their little hates on a big war that those of us who've been raising hell all our lives can sit back now and watch 'em rave."

"If I felt the way you do, I'd be honest and say I was a conscientious objector!"

"You've got me wrong, Abby. I'm a conscienceless objector."

RED DAMASK

But this honesty stuff. You can have it, sister! I can just see you training the nice little prison vermin to do Morris dances or uplifting them with needlework. I don't like prisons, and I don't like having my family starve. I share some of your Grandfather's views. No. I'll suffer Wilson's rhetoric in silence. That is, comparative silence."

"Oh, you!" said Abby, wrathfully. He was a slacker. Oh, much more of a slacker than Gilbert. He was seditious, a traitor, unpatriotic. "Oh, he has the live-est eyes I ever saw!" thought she.

They smiled at her, dazzling behind steel-rimmed spectacles, sending blue magic to her throat. She swallowed hard, and gazed at his high forehead, and then at the way his chin jutted out, at his hewn, pointed features. Like a new pattern forming in a kaleidoscope, they clicked into harmony. Why hadn't she seen it before? Like an eagle was his keen hewn face. Strong. Hardy. Lean. The other men she knew were pigeons! "Of course," she thought, "so many men look better in uniform."

He spoke first. "They seem to be wanting you at the desk, Abby. Hurry, or the Huns'll get us!"

While Abby added luncheon checks, she hummed absently:

"Ich singe wie der Vogel singt
Der in den Zweigen wohnt."

Good Heavens, how terrible! If any one heard her German! But nobody did.

And Abby forgot that she hadn't mentioned Lucia or Gilbert.

The next day Matthew Heron came to the lunch room, and the next day he came also. Tacitly Abby adjusted her lunch time to his. Feministically she paid her own lunch check. He came every day. And neither spoke of his coming nor of Gilbert's not

RED DAMASK

coming. (Disliking amateur service, Gilbert took superior officers to lunch at the New Willard Hotel.)

Abby's fellow workers thought Heron was her brother, and their taking him for granted helped her to take him for granted. Then he fitted several formulas. Hahls and Wendels considered one's "old teacher" safe. Idealistically, Abby thought, "If we think it's innocent, it is." And vaguely, he came under the timely label of "morale."

In fact, Abby hadn't much time to think about him. She got home from the lunch room at five o'clock. Then Philip was weighed and bathed and played with; then Abby's bodily presence never failed him. Nana didn't welcome her, but Abby accepted Nana's moods, another gnat bite, like the cook's complaints of the stove. After all, when Philip had measles and almost died of it (the doctor said only an inexplicable tenacity kept him from dying of it), Nana stayed up nursing him, night after night. She wouldn't let Abby get a night nurse, could she have gotten one there in war time. When Abby stayed up herself, she couldn't get Nana to bed. Nana never spared herself, nursing. "After all," thought Abby, "such devotion is rare." (She didn't think how rarely it was called for; she didn't know what happened in between.)

From the nursery Abby went to the servants' hall to deliver a patriotic lecture to a Swedish waitress or an Irish chambermaid, who resented not having conveniences they were used to. Meals had to be planned according to war regulations and Gilbert's latest diet. Gilbert was putting on weight. He had to reduce, and yet he had to "keep up his strength."

Then Abby had to dress for dinners that were her chores and Gilbert's ecstasies.

He could talk war and ordnance to fellow officers, especially superior officers. Outside the lunch room, Abby had nothing in

RED DAMASK

common with their wives. They said what their husbands said about the war, and their husbands said what the newspapers said, and the newspapers said what the Publicity Department told them to say. Some read war books; more read light novels Abby scorned. A few cared a bit for music; few cared anything for art; and Abby cared nothing for bridge. Some told witty stories about people they knew or things that had happened to them, "human-interest stories" that would have amused Donna. Having no "point," Abby called them "gossip," and wouldn't listen to them.

Once Gilbert said, slyly, "You remember how anxious you were to move to Texas, years ago? Women like these would have been your friends."

"How can you tell? I've met some awfully interesting women at Donna's, from the South. You can't draw conclusions from one crowd. You can't draw conclusions from anything!" said Abby, amazingly. The obsession that made her disagree with Gilbert sometimes brought strange words out of Abby.

But Gilbert, who dated things, happily noted that on the 8th of October, 1918, Abby stopped disagreeing with him. She stopped defending the weather when he deplored it, and twitting him about his "dollar-a-year-majority," and making fun of his diets. On the 8th of October Abby started being sweet.

Naturally, realized Gilbert, the war had been a strain; and the air rang now with rumors of peace. Abby's brother Karl was working in Paris; two of the Hardenburg boys were in the trenches. Andrew Conrad had been killed, a shock when it happened to some one you knew, even if he weren't a friend. And Abby herself had worked too hard. Naturally she looked forward to her own home again and Dr. Giles for Philip. Gilbert could find several reasons for Abby's sweetness.

RED DAMASK

On Friday, October the 18th, at twelve-twenty-five, Abby went to the dressing room, as usual. She expected Matthew Heron at twelve-thirty. As usual, she brushed her hair smooth under her veil and put on a fresh apron. (Since the 8th of October she had put on so many fresh aprons, so many fresh kerchiefs and white uniforms, that her laundress asked for a raise—and got it.) As usual, at twelve-thirty she sat at the tiny table in the corner, which, tacitly, they had adopted. At twelve-forty, he hadn't come.

Could something have happened to him? Fear tugged her chest. A street accident. Taxicabs were so reckless. Ah, such 'things don't happen to people you know! It had never happened to anybody she knew. After all, people often were ten minutes late.

At twelve-fifty she compared her wrist watch with the big clock on the wall, hoping it was fast. It was five minutes slow, instead. Twelve-fifty-five. Twelve-fifty-five and a half. Oh, time passed slower if you watched it. Did she expect it to pass without his coming? Of course he'd come! She went to the dressing room and brushed her hair again, and then in a panic, for fear he'd come and think she hadn't waited, she dashed out.

"Oh, Miss Mayberry, has anybody come for me?"

"No, Mrs. Ware. Do you want us to save your table?"

"Certainly," said Abby. "That girl has too many teeth," she thought, vindictively.

It was five minutes after one. Oh, he must come! How many khaki figures came through that big glass door. Why couldn't one of them be his? Just one. Such a quick khaki figure. Not very tall. Four inches shorter than Gilbert. One inch taller than she. They had measured once at a fair at Willetts. But he seemed . . .

She almost knocked the table over getting up. No, it wasn't

RED DAMASK

he. Her throat ached for the way he'd look at that corner; catch her eye; smile faintly; come over and sit down. Never any "How-do-you-do?" or "How-are-you?" Never any greeting, since that first day.

It was one-fifteen. Could he be forty-five minutes late?

A young officer sat with Miss Mayberry at the next table. What a loud voice she had! How silly they were, laughing together. Didn't they know there was a war going on?

Suppose he didn't come. Today, or tomorrow, or ever again. Oh, surely he'd telephone!

The telephone rang.

Abby ran for it, running into a girl with a tray.

"I beg your pardon!"

She seized the phone from the desk.

"Is this the Congressional Library?" said a sweet voice.

Abby shook the phone, as if she'd shake his voice out of it.

It was two o'clock.

"Mrs. Ware, Mrs. Hurley wants to use your table. Is it all right?"

"Yes," said Abby, tonelessly.

"Your brother must have been detained. Would you like a tray over here?"

"A tray." She couldn't think of food! "Your brother." What did she mean? Karl was in Paris. Funny, the way he'd pulled wires to get there, to study the effects of serums from tubercular vaccines. Something about immunizing children. She couldn't understand it, exactly. (But thinking about it, and Karl, was an escape from herself.) In 1917 Karl had pulled wires to stay here! But when he wanted to go, he had to go. Wanting seemed to hypnotize him. And Donna was upset for once. (Thinking of Donna's upset slightly soothed her own.)

RED DAMASK

"When you live in a world with people, you never know what'll happen next," Donna had written.

"Oh, what will happen next, to me!" Abby's thoughts fumbled, back on herself, at loose ends, tangled, in a maze of dull despair.

At seven-thirty Gilbert said: "Abby, what do you think? Colonel Bridges has invited me to his golf club tomorrow afternoon."

"Another opportunity to do your bit before the Peace," said Abby, cruelly, not so sweet on the 18th of October.

"Going to fight the Bolsheviki when this war's over, sister?" asked Heron the next day, as if nothing had happened. He made no excuse, no apology.

And what should he apologize for, and why? Abby meant to be angry. (For what, and why?) Glad instead, she gazed at him, noting for the hundredth time that harmony his features clicked to.

"Do you think I have to be fighting something?" she said.

"Unless you make peace, with a victory!" His eyes flamed blue magic at her.

"I suppose Bolshevism is a world menace," she said, hurriedly.

"Yes'm. If you need one. But what are you going to do with this Saturday afternoon, young lady? Or do you write sonnets to Wilson on half holidays?"

"Why, I hadn't thought. Gilbert is playing golf with a colonel . . ."

"And Lucia is playing bridge with a colonel's wife. Let's you and me balance their bureaucracy and take a street-car ride. I'll bet you haven't taken a street-car ride since you've been here."

"I haven't."

"And you always talking about democracy! I'll see that you practise it. You've got to eat a hot-dog sandwich and drink

RED DAMASK

pink pop. Shall I take you to a ball game? No. I've renounced sacrifices, even for noble causes. We'll go out to Rock Creek Park and sit on the grass and be idyllic and get rheumatism. No. I was joking. We've got a few years. . . . Twenty-nine and thirty-eight. . . . In a year you'll be thirty, Abby. Balzac said . . ."

"I've got to be home at five for Philip!" she interrupted him.

That afternoon Abby wore brown serge, long, tight-fitting, with a wide serge belt and a plain flat satin collar of warm, pinkish tan, the dress severe, untrimmed, except at one shoulder where a flower was embroidered in tan wool, its red center picked out in emerald green, colors which would have sworn had one tone varied. In perfect tune, they sang, softly. Her brown felt sailor hat had some sprigs of wheat around the crown, and its brim at one side drooped, while the other was cut clean away to show a sliver of brown hair and a clear tanned profile, like a cameo, silhouetted against it.

"I'm going to make you sit on the outside, Abby," said Heron, "though that isn't proper street-car etiquette. I hope it won't spoil your day. But it would spoil mine to talk to a hat when you're on the other side of it. Not that it isn't a nice hat. You look swell. No, not charming or fascinating. Swell. I'll say you're a baby-doll in that get-up. Now, how does it feel to be ruined? Oh, Abby, look at the rose-madder. Blushing at twenty-nine! We'll send you to a front-line trench and let the Germans shoot words at you, and send the body to Gilbert."

"What are you going to do when the war's over?" Abby changed the subject.

"What I can get to do! Lord! the things I thought I was going to do when I was young! Among other things I was going to prove that decoration didn't stop with the Greeks. If the bull

RED DAMASK

with a wreath celebrated their feasts, why shouldn't we use modern symbols for ours? Remember that old fur store front I did for your husband? Not bad. But not too good. I sketched a frieze afterward for a ballroom in a country house. Cocktail glasses. Crossed like this. Curves were all right. Crisp lines. Everybody in the office wanted to know what club cocktail I was advertising. I told 'em to go to hell and then went home and thought it over. You know, they were right! I've got a theory about it. Every symbol in our modern life is used for advertising. You expect to be sold something when you look at one. Who'd get pure line out of a piston rod, or a motor wheel, or that hat of yours? It's there, but the eye's trained to follow up with, 'What make's that, and how much does it cost?' and when it sees acanthus leaves it responds to, 'This is art. I ought to like it.' So, personally, I expect to go on making acanthus leaves, and bulls with wreaths, until they begin to advertise funerals, and then we'll leave off the wreaths."

"Couldn't people be educated? To see line and form for itself, I mean."

"Change a national response? Oh, Abby, you're always talking about what-ought-to-be instead of what is. Anyway, look out of the window. What do you see now?"

"An awful street, with tumble-down buildings that ought to be repaired. Why, that one looks as if it's going to fall down. It needs painting . . ."

"And has the loveliest greens and grays and blues in it. And that jagged line where the roof sags couldn't be beat. If those were Roman ruins you'd be raving about them. You're trained to rave at American ruins. And you're above the average. So much for æsthetics. But, Abby, I thought you were a classicist, anyway. I thought you were going to stab me with a hatpin

RED DAMASK

when we had a similar argument in your husband's office some years ago."

"But I hate to see you settle down to acanthus leaves, when you wanted to do the other."

"Oh!" He didn't pursue this sample of abstract argument. "If art patrons hadn't gone out with the French Revolution, and bank robbery weren't so complicated I'd start my atelier for youngsters, beginning at twelve years old. There's not a decent school in the country that isn't organized to meet college-entrance requirements. Gifted youngsters harnessed to *Ivanhoe*, trigonometry, and French verbs! I'm not saying they're not all right for the herd. This isn't a democratic notion! It's the exceptionals I'm thinking about. Art schools won't take 'em so young, you know. I'd let 'em work the way they want to, and kick 'em out if they didn't want to work. The best men in the country would give a hand. So much for de-standardizing gifted youth. Abby, how do you like street-car riding?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten we were on a street-car!"

In the park they wandered until they found a grassy knoll sheltered from any of the paths by a little hill on one side, and shrubbery on the other. Papers and eggshells covered a wooden bench. Heron brushed them off with his handkerchief. "All ready now, for the butler and the kitchenmaid on their afternoon off."

Abby colored. "It's awful the way American parks are kept," she said, indignantly, her eyes fixed on a heap of fallen leaves. Some dried ones rustled wildly, in a slight soft breeze. Others merely stirred. A few green ones were still.

"They do these things so much better in Germany," teased Heron. "Say, Abby, you looked guilty when I talked about sonnets to Wilson. Did you ever write one? Be honest!"

"I did. But it was a very bad sonnet."

RED DAMASK

"That doesn't help matters. I'll bet you had a hard time finding something to rhyme with vision."

"Maybe I did. But Wilson has it, just the same. He's putting it into statesmanship for the first time."

"You mean he's trying to put statesmanship into phrases."

"Into ideals."

"And out of reality. If Europe ever stops fighting permanently, I mean, it'd be because of bad business, not on account of any visions."

"How can you be so sordid?"

He took hold of her arm and shook her. "How can you be so silly?" he said, laughing. Then he stopped laughing.

As if his touch were a lasso, Abby turned her face up to him, spontaneously, childishly, unconsciously.

"Oh, Abby!" he murmured with a little groan, as he kissed her.

He couldn't get enough of kissing her. "You're wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!" he whispered.

She said nothing. She couldn't say anything. She only was feeling whole.

The sound of an automobile separated them. "What have we done!" Abby said, aghast. Her mind echoed, "What have I been doing for weeks!" Dazed, she wondered at herself, while her heart tapped an exultant tattoo and she wanted to stretch back her head to that tangy autumn air and lift her arms and be glad.

"We've done what butlers and kitchenmaids always do on their afternoons off," Heron tried to say, lightly, but his voice shook and was strained.

"I wish we were a butler and a kitchenmaid," said Abby, bitterly. "What are we going to do?"

He took her hands gently, and kissed each finger on its tip. "We'll elope to Mexico. But you wouldn't like Mexico. It

RED DAMASK

wouldn't be moral enough for Miss Prissy Priscilla. Aren't you Miss Prissy Priscilla?"

"I never knew love could be so—jolly," sang something inside Abby, and then it stopped singing. She turned away and gazed at that heap of whirling leaves. "Mexico not moral enough for me?" she said. "How can I talk about morals now?"

Heron grabbed her shoulders and shook her fiercely. "If you were my wife I'd beat you. I think you'd like it, too, once. Listen, you damned little fool. Is this going to upset you? Can't you forget your hellish standards for a minute? Do you think you're immoral because you've been kissed?" Furiously he glared at her. Then he sat down, leaned over, and put his head in his hands. "Oh, Abby, must you always think? Can't you just feel?"

"That's what I've been doing all these weeks. I haven't mentioned your name to Gilbert. I've just been feeling and not realizing anything. And it's beastly unless we could follow through and do it cleanly—go away together. And you know we never could do that."

"Hardly. It takes every cent I can scrape to keep things going. And I wouldn't leave my kids. Anyway, I'm fond of Lucia, you know. She's been a mighty good sport all these years."

Abby shrank from him and his fondness for Lucia. If this weren't a grand passion, it was degrading, and how could a man in a grand passion be fond of his wife? And yet, in that place, and of all times, curiously, an old stab healed. Gilbert's old laugh ceased to echo and infect. For the first time in years, her vanity appeased, Abby thought of Gilbert without a stony urge to hurt him. For the first time in years she realized clearly that she was fond of him, and saw his sweetness and his fairness and his abilities free of vaporous resentment. Fond was the word. Their habits, interests, lives were interwound. Fond of her hus-

RED DAMASK

band, with her lover there? What sort of a person was she, anyway?

And then she looked at Heron, and stopped caring.

"I've got to go home, I've got to go home," chanted a bugle from a near-by cantonment. "And you didn't get any pink pop," said Heron. He stood, pulled Abby to her feet, and before she could stop him he drew her close and kissed her until she went quite limp and very pale.

"There! You wonderful, wonderful, wonderful! . . . Dizzy? You darling! We've got to get home before five o'clock, you said. *C'est la guerre!*"

"The funny part of it is," said Abby, "that I stop thinking when I look at you. Whenever I try to decide what we're going to do, a sort of fog—you know that jellyish heat there's been this summer—sort of floats right through me. I like it, but it's confusing."

"Especially hard on metaphors," he teased.

They were on a path now. Oblivious of passers-by, bewitched, Abby gazed at him, her mustard-colored eyes shouting what she felt. "I didn't know that love could be so jolly!" she said.

But why, if it were jolly, did her throat ache with unshed tears?

She got home to find Gilbert all upset. The chauffeur had forgotten the bag with his change of underlinen in it; after playing golf, he had motored to town in damp clothes. He knew he'd get a cold or influenza. Washington was full of them.

Abby ran downstairs for whisky and soda. She phoned the druggist for medicated alcohol. "If you give yourself a good rub you'll be all right. Do you think we ought to go out to dinner tonight? They say to avoid crowds."

RED DAMASK

"It's only to be a small party. And we shouldn't disappoint Major Webster."

"All right," said Abby, gently. "I'll have a nice hot cup of tea brought up before you go. And you might take some aspirin later, to play perfectly safe."

In the day nursery she hugged Jojo until Nana scowled, and Jojo said, "Ow! You hurt!" But no hugs could hurt Philip. His thin little face glowed. "Guh! Guh!" shouted he. Then anxiously Abby examined his weight sheet, his diet list. Conscientiously she wondered, had she left anything undone?

"It's Baby's bedtime, Mrs. Ware," said Nana, stiffly.

"I noticed your *Tender Tales* downstairs, Nana. I'll have it sent up," said Abby, kindly. Abby, who wanted to uplift the public taste!

At dinner, Major Webster, a pompous lawyer from Chicago, told her how wonderful Chicago was; how sordid was New York. "My brother-in-law has moved out there, and he loves it," smiled Abby sweetly to words that usually enraged her. "The Republican party is the only party that understands Government," said he. And Abby, detesting Wilson's enemies, answered, "It has some very fine men."

Generally Abby aggressively insisted on opinions, an aggression men disliked. No man who knew her only casually ever had been attracted to her. Men had to know her well to turn her bristles off. (Heron loved her bristles, Lucia having none.) But tonight, like a friendly porcupine, her bristles flattened. Engagingly she beamed, inner sparks fanned to dancing flames.

Major Webster was susceptible to flames. He flirted desperately at Abby, and Abby in her radiance was kind, as unaware of flirtatious majors as she was of Charlemagne or cheese.

But Gilbert noticed him. "That's a fine way to act," thought

RED DAMASK

he. "I thought he was a friend of mine. And in his own home, too. I'm surprised at Abby. It's the sort of thing one expects of Regina, but Abby . . ."

At home, all the way upstairs he didn't speak to Abby. "Good night," he said, severely. "I want to register my disapproval," he told himself.

Unaware of Gilbert's disapproval, alone in her own room, Abby's radiance left her. Reality took its place and sent her walking, as if it literally pursued her. A man, not her husband, had kissed her. And the thought of his kisses sent an ache, a sharp hungry ache, exquisite, unbearable, from her chest to her throat and back. It was all wrong, wrong, wrong. She was wicked. Then a deep blush went hot on her face, on her neck. She clenched her hands and twisted her wrists until they hurt, and threw herself on the bed, to sob. Sobs shook her rigid tortured body, dry sobs without tears. She loved him. God! How she loved him!

Well, what of it?

She dragged herself up and sat on the edge of a rocking-chair, resting her chin on her hands. She couldn't go off with him, like women in the newspapers, and leave Philip and Jojo and Gilbert. Wryly, she remembered that he hadn't asked her to! Oh, she wished he had! Was nothing, not even a love affair, complete, as it ought to be?

The love itself was complete. Everything about him enchanted her! "Especially hard on metaphors." . . . The way he snapped on things . . . spontaneously. . . . She visualized his face. . . . How high his forehead was, and his hair, never smooth. . . . His chin jutted out, strong as a rock. The way his eyes went sapphire, blazing into hers. . . . Well, this wasn't getting her anywhere!

She took off her clothes and put on a gray kimono. "It looks

RED DAMASK

like a Methodist minister's wife's kimono," Regina had said when she bought it in New York. She had felt gray then. Now she felt like red chiffon and purple velvet, tortured, twisted chiffon, velvet that pulled till it tore.

What was the use of going to bed? She wouldn't sleep, and what of it? Round and round that room she padded, again, softly, in gray satin mules, softly, fearing she'd be heard.

What now? What was going to happen? She'd give up Matthew Heron, of course. What else was there to do? You either had to go away with a man you loved or give him up. No sneaking, furtive, hypocritical middle path for them! But what a gray path it would be! Why red chiffon at least was red if it tortured and twisted; purple velvet was color even if it pulled. At least she was alive now. Soon she'd be dead again. Oh, she was alive now, all right! Terribly alive. Racked. Pulled. Twisted. Oh! She dug her nails into clenched hands and fairly ran around that room.

She slacked her pace. She didn't care what Mike thought about the war or anything important. Nothing mattered but Mike, Mike, Mike himself! The darling! . . . So had Dudley Kenheim mattered. Was this, then, just another infatuation, an unspiritual animal affair? What kind of a person was she, to have had so many men in her life? What of it? Mike! Mike! Mike! How could she give him up?

She stopped in the middle of the room and listened to an ache, locating it, quite definitely, under her left breast—a quavering, wavering pain. Oh, why must she suffer like this? She felt sorry for herself, and the pain shifted to her throat, below her tongue, and small aches crept in where tonsils used to be. She shut her eyes and saw him coming through the lunch-room door, brisk, sure of himself, such a certainty of hardihood, of strength, and cool control of blazing fires, so much of a man!

RED DAMASK

She couldn't stand it. She had to stand it. What else could she do? One thing, it couldn't last like this. Such an intense pain never could last.

Maybe, after all, it was a physical pain, symptom of some curious ill. As if to show her that it wasn't, it went away—and came right back again.

An unspiritual, animal affair? Ah, what was spiritual, what animal in a person? How could you divide them? What was a person, anyway? This she knew for herself. Never had she felt so welded, so all-of-a-piece. If this were unspiritual, the best of life was, and she knew it wasn't. She knew that this was beautiful, too beautiful, for apparently when things were too beautiful you couldn't have them.

Oh, why?

When Heron phoned the next morning, Sunday morning, Gilbert had gone to the golf club, an extra silk handkerchief in his pocket—to play safe—a bag with fresh linen in his hands.

"I want to talk to you," said Heron, abruptly. "Will you meet me in a half hour at Summerville's drug store on Sixth street, Southwest?"

"Yes," said Abby.

Guiltily she looked up from the telephone. Had anybody heard her? Hurriedly she grabbed her plainest clothes. "Why, madam, your brown cape on Sunday morning?" said Dorothy, the chambermaid, who maided her. "Yes. It may rain," said Abby, hating a golden sun. "This time of year," she chattered, "you never can tell." Was Dorothy thinking anything? Oh, how horrid, having to hoodwink servants! Unnecessarily she told Nana she was going for a walk. Unnecessarily, she wondered would the waitress think it queer that she wasn't playing

RED DAMASK

golf today? There were no taxicabs on save-gasoline Sundays. Suppose some one saw her in this street car? Ah, furtiveness was hateful, degrading any love, however beautiful. Momentarily she recoiled from Matthew Heron. He made her do this!

"Sorry," was his greeting.

Always, intuitively, he knew what she felt. And always he exceeded her dreams. Everything in her life before had paled beside anticipation. But how pale was any dream beside the gush of magic when she saw him!

"Have you time for the park?"

"No, no!" If they were where he could touch her, she couldn't think. They wouldn't talk, and they must talk.

They left Summerville's drug store and walked down a shabby street; past a wooden Indian on the sidewalk, its faded gilt tomahawk bright white gold in the sun; past a negro in uniform, medals on his breast, two dusky belles on his arm; past two French sailors and an English private; past a tumble-down church and from its open windows a chorus of voices pled:

"Lead thou me on!

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see—"

Two motor lorries passed them, and an ambulance.

"I don't see why they haven't built a government spoonio for war workers," grumbled Heron.

"I'm glad they haven't. Mike, we can't just drift like this. We've got to settle things and stop seeing each other. Oh, it's just a muddle!"

"Last night I walked the floor all night." (She loved his walking the floor all night, his doing what she had done.) "I had to slip out into the dining room to do it. Though Lucia sleeps like a log." (She would. The vegetable! But how Abby

RED DAMASK

loathed the thought of that shared room.) "And I figured mad, impossible things, and dreamed mad, impossible dreams—of taking you away some place. If I had fifteen thousand a year for certain . . ."

"I've got plenty of money," she said.

"I'm not interested in your money," he said, harshly.

"Oh, it isn't a financial problem, anyway," said Abby. "It's much deeper. We can't leave our families."

"No, we can't. I'm crazy about my kids. I can't see you deserting that boy of yours, either. I couldn't leave John and Matty to Lucia to train as upper servants. Not that she isn't a good mother, according to her lights. It's only that her lights throw too many shadows. And don't get the idea that I'm not fond of Lucia. I am. I have been . . . very fond."

Abby turned and stared at a dusty warehouse window in a gray boxlike building, horridly decorated with dirty molded tin. Dodging a drove of army mules, they crossed a muddy street that smelled like old cigar stumps and garbage, and within herself Abby fought a feeling of constraint; a constraint made of Matthew Heron's fondness for Lucia, mixed with recoil from such a sordid street. They tacitly had chosen it because, being sordid, it was safe.

Matthew Heron instantly felt that constraint. It locked within him what he wanted to tell her. He wanted to share his intimate thoughts, his intimate experiences. He wanted to tell Abby about his marriage—how happy it had been until Matty came, who shouldn't have come, since they couldn't afford two children; how Lucia's fearing a third turned passion to a chore which she avoided, until he lost it, too. It was incomplete for him, unshared. Emotionally Lucia had become his sister, a loving sister, understanding, understood, never to

RED DAMASK

be hurt and never to be desired. He knew some of her limitations. He knew some of Abby's, too.

So, though he loathed euphemism, Matthew Heron said, "I suppose some idealists would say that I ought to step out and give Lucia a chance to be . . . very fond . . . of somebody else. But Lucia doesn't attract men that way, any more. She's forty now, too. Some women at forty . . ."

Abby had had enough of Lucia.

"Of course we couldn't have a furtive love affair," she said.

They had come to the end of the pavement. On either side of an ashy cindered path were shanties, bald, bare shanties nobody could call picturesque. A fat unkempt negress in a pink mother-hubbard lolled on a sofa at an open window; on the next porch, a vicious-looking white man in filthy blue jeans fondled a snarling, chained raccoon. Stale odors weighed the sunlit air. Abby, in her flying cape, Abby in her close-fitting hat, like a bronze silk fillet around her head, Abby beside him in that garbage dump, was like some rare fine figurine from Tanagra. How could Matthew Heron, with his fatal sensitivity to flying capes and figurines, talk brutally to her here and now?

For what he could say would seem brutal to her. In fact, it might repel her forever. And Matthew Heron's æstheticism was as basic as his realism, anyway. There, where furtiveness and sex were latent at their ugliest, his æstheticism kept him from telling her that furtiveness, properly managed, could be mere invisibility; that sex, properly expressed, was the zest of life, its own justification. Now he believed morality to be relative to time and place and people, its judgments dependent on probable results. They were in a complicated situation. Furtiveness was the least of its evils, since neither wanted to hurt anyone, both being normally supplied with sympathetic imaginations. Both had a sense of responsibility, too. If he had his fifteen thousand a

RED DAMASK

year, they couldn't, wouldn't run away. Plato had named the noble lie. Many must have lived it. They couldn't see each other now without kindling scorching fires. Well, they should stick it and swing it. Burn those fires in some hidden hearth. What were fires for? Smoldering, they damaged things. He could handle sexual needs better than Abby could; he called them by their names, and he was busy. In his work he had an outlet which she lacked. And a woman scorned was a pale fury beside a hungry woman, starved. Abby, obviously, was starved. Obviously, Gilbert would have to suffer, not only for his own mild nature, but for Abby's . . . not sinning, if sin it could be called. But how could he take grappling irons to a Tanagra figurine?

He couldn't, then and there. He took satin pads, some residue of early training. He wasn't the right person to say such things to her, he decided. She must learn for herself, freely, without his influence.

"You must decide for yourself," said he.

"There's nothing to decide. We just mustn't ever see each other again. Darling! Darling! Darling! But couldn't we tell each other good-by, just once?"

"No," he said abruptly. "If it's good-by, it's good-by now."

He turned a corner and left her, without another word.

He left her, hurrying. Her skirt was tight. She couldn't run after him.

"Well, of all things!" she murmured aloud. For him to leave her alone, in such a place! Bewildered, she stood for a moment. Where was a street car? The fat negress was watching from her open window.

Abby set her teeth. "Can you tell me where the nearest street car is?"

RED DAMASK

And the woman, that terrible woman, gave her languid directions, and Abby followed them and went home.

That evening she was called from dinner to the telephone.

"You understood, today?" said Heron.

"Yes." (In three hours she had managed it. But, oh, could Gilbert hear her through that swinging pantry door?)

"I want to talk to you. I was a damned fool today. You're an adult. I'm going to talk to you straight." (After an æsthetic explosion, Heron always could talk straight.)

"No," said Abby, in a panic. (How she hated this! What was the waitress thinking? What had she said, anyway?)

"You mean you don't want to talk to me again? Life's short. You're a long time dead. Do you expect to be checked up on that stone tablet from Sinai?"

"There's no use. It'd only be . . . harder."

"This is final?" His voice went flat.

"Yes." She hung up the receiver.

"Who wanted you at the phone?" said Gilbert, carelessly.

"Oh . . . uh . . . one of the women from the lunch room," said Abby, reddening, eyes bent on her plate.

She had lied. If only she could scrub her mouth with soap! That lie stuck there, like a sore. She, who loathed slyness, had been sly. Ah, she loathed herself, and she couldn't bear to loathe herself.

And yet, after all, in a big way, hadn't she done the right thing? Hadn't she renounced her lover? What more could a fine woman do?

Her spirits rose on her fineness. Renunciation, sacrifice to duty, self-mastery, virtue and purity—her old upholstery, a pattern of idealistic phrases—sustained her with all its silken

RED DAMASK

strength. And she needed sustenance. Her job, the war, was failing her. Peace almost had come.

At times her upholstery failed her, too. When the telephone rang, her heart rang viciously, turning her sick. "Is it for me?" She hated everyone who phoned her. None was Matthew Heron. At post time, she'd watch the postman come three blocks and hate each house he went to, for each delayed his coming there. Her body would come alive, atremble, faint with eagerness, as that gray uniform walked, too deliberately, up the stone walk to their veranda. She'd clench her fists to keep from grabbing from him. Ah, how she loathed those bills and circulars and letters from the family! Then an ache would tighten in her chest and travel to her throat. Oh, what was there for him to write, anyway? She didn't care. She wanted a word. Wanted it. Wanted it. Wanted it. She begged some nameless deity for just one sight of his blunt, black, printlike script.

When six days had passed since she'd seen Matthew Heron, the postman gave her a letter, addressed in blunt, black, printlike script. Blind with excitement, blinking by the umbrella stand, she tore it open.

Kearney.

Klothes for Kiddies.

Exhibit the latest winter styles for the youngsters.

At 58 D Street.

How dare somebody have handwriting like his!

Through the hall ran Jojo, ahead of Miss Kerrinault, singing at the top of her voice.

"Cowardy, cowardy, custard,
Bread and butter and mustard,
Make way for the am-bu-lance,
The Wed Cwoss am-bu-lance!"

RED DAMASK

Pulling a small iron wagon across the hardwood floor, she spouted five-year-old glee, her round face rosy under a blue tam o'shanter, jauntily on one side over auburn curls.

"Jojo!" Abby turned on her furiously. "You know perfectly well that you are not allowed to drag things on these hardwood floors. They aren't our floors, and we must take care of them! Where are you going?"

"I'm taking her to the Zoo, Mrs. Ware," said Miss Kerrinault.

"To see bears and elephants and monkey-monks!

"Once upon a time when the pigs were swine,
And the monkeys ate bananas,"

sang Jojo, numb to maternal fury. The world, and the Zoo still were hers.

"Well, you're just not going to the Zoo," said Abby, firmly. "You must learn that you can't just disregard other people's rights."

"Not go to the Zoo?" Jojo's red lips trembled. "But, Mother . . ."

"That will do, Jojo. You are not punished often. But you must learn . . ."

"Wh-wahh-hah-hah! Ow-wow-wowow-wow!" howled Jojo.

In Abby's throat tears had hardened to a lump, almost an exultant lump.

She left Miss Kerrinault to comfort Jojo. But Jojo got more comfort from grabbing Philip's baa-lamb; he wailed when his baa-lamb was grabbed.

The next morning, Sunday, it rained.

Jojo scrunched newspapers into lumps and called them bunnies, and chased Gilbert with them. He ran about the library in mock terror, Jojo squealing with joy.

RED DAMASK

With Jojo, Gilbert actually could forget himself.

It bored Abby to watch him.

"Rest time, Jojo," said Miss Kerrinault, at eleven.

"Pick up the papers, Jojo," said Abby.

"Don yanna pick up the papers," said Jojo, confidingly.

"Papers need to rest now."

Jojo was not clever nor sensitive. She was a little stuffed goose. But she had charm. Abby couldn't see why she should get everything with what Nana called her "cute little ways."

Now Abby watched her go to Gilbert's chair, her blue eyes brimming with fun. She climbed on his knees, pressed round cheeks to his, and sighed. "My daddy'll pick up the papers for Jojo?" She turned and faced him, her face comically sad.

"You know he will, you little monkey," said Gilbert, burrowing into her neck.

And she pretended she was chasing him again while he gathered the papers and put them in the waste basket.

Abby, sitting on the edge of a chair, watched them. Her teeth worried at the inside of her lips, sometimes painfully. When she was miserable, ready to jump out of her skin, taut with hopelessness, what right had they to be so happy? (They who stood between her and her heart's desire.) Their chumminess irked her, made her feel outside. (And hadn't she sacrificed everything for them?)

"Gilbert, you shouldn't spoil that child so," she said, after Jojo had gone.

"Now, Abby, when she comes up to me like that . . . how could anyone resist her? Have a heart!"

"Have a heart" echoed shrilly. How could she have a heart when it was broken?

Abby looked at Gilbert in that comfortable leather chair, turning the pages of the *Eclectic Monthly*, not an unattractive figure

RED DAMASK

in his specially tailored uniform. He was getting a little stout, a trifle bald, but his skin was still clear, his gray eyes bright. And fatuous! He sat there with that magazine, complacent, while she suffered. He who had robbed her of her birthright. Happiness. He'd had his chance, but he didn't want a chance. He wanted health insurance. Abby's lip curled. She looked back almost clearly now, yet, unwilling to admit inherent physical and psychic differences that put things she wanted to idealize on a mechanistic basis.

One pointed tooth bit her lip till it bled. That slight pain sent fury whirling through her, fury Heron had foreseen, an urge of hurt to hurt.

"Gilbert, I've been . . . seeing . . . somebody," she said, impulsively, harshly, her words ahead of her thoughts. But swiftly her thoughts tapped a justification, a noble justification, grabbed from silk upholstery, remote from parental jealousies and ugly things, like bitten dogs that bite. Of course. Her better self would make her tell Gilbert the truth! She ought to be honest. How could she live a lie, she who wanted to be good!

But Gilbert yawned. "So? I've been seeing somebody, too. Lots of people. What's the idea? They say this is a good article on the Turkish question. Have you read . . ."

Oh, she'd cut that calm! "Somebody I . . . care for," she interrupted him.

"Me, too," said Gilbert. "Honestly, Abby, wasn't that child the sweetest thing you ever saw when she climbed up on my knee?" He looked up from his magazine, his eyes moist. "But, Abby, I've been reading some of your Freud. Do you think maybe Jojo's getting too fond of me?"

"I don't think you need to worry. I've seen her act that way with the cook when she wanted some cake. I wasn't referring

RED DAMASK

to Electra complexes anyway. I mean . . . somebody kissed me . . . and I liked it. Now do you understand?"

"Were you playing kissing games in the lunch room?" He sighed. "I wish it would stop raining. I'd like to get some exercise before lunch."

"Don't be so dense! It wasn't a game. We . . . we meant it, terribly."

The magazine slipped off Gilbert's knee; its pages whirled on the rug. He thought slowly and paled slowly. He stared at Abby. She nodded, half scornful, half triumphant, wholly noble. She had done the right thing. Deception would have corroded her.

Gilbert blustered. "Well, that's a fine way to act. I might expect such a thing of Regina. But you . . . Abby! Have you been seeing Dudley Kenheim?" He stood in front of her, shaking an accusing finger, as Mother might have done.

"No, I haven't been seeing Dudley Kenheim." She laughed, shortly.

"Oh, it's that Major Mayberry, I suppose. You needn't think I didn't notice the way he looked at you the other night. In his own home! I wonder what people thought. This is a fine thing. After six years of married life. Abby, it is that Major Mayberry, isn't it?" He had to know, and he didn't want to know. When he knew it wasn't Dudley Kenheim, relief waved through him. He wanted another relief.

Abby gave it to him. "No, of course it isn't Major Mayberry." But what right had he to question her, who had been over-questioned all her life? This was as bad as one of Mother's breakfast catechisms. "I'm not going to tell you who it is," she said, defiantly. She wouldn't tell him that, because (she fumbled for a noble reason), because she had no right to tell Heron's secret, after all! The world could think nobody mat-

RED DAMASK

tered but his Lucia. (Wouldn't she like Lucia to know, though, Lucia who had snubbed her so? It would serve Lucia right to learn that her husband wasn't anti-Semitic. Hardly!)

"I don't want to know," said Gilbert, with dignity. Then he rubbed his hand across his forehead. What were they talking about, anyway? Was this some crazy dream? "Abby, I don't understand. Don't you love me any more?" He went to the table, removed the silver stopper from a Merlin water bottle, poured some in a glass, lifted it to his lips, and put it back untouched. "Abby, do you mean you want a divorce and all that sort of thing? Like women in the newspapers? Abby, I must be dreaming. Or aren't you joking or something! Oh, tell me you're joking, Abby!"

But his body knew more than his mind. His hands clenched and shook. His teeth chattered queerly. He reached for Abby. "Abby! You're not going to leave me, Abby! Abby, you're not going to leave me! Oh, say you're not going to leave me!" He knelt by her chair and put his head in her lap.

Frightened, Abby tried to soothe him. "No. No. I'm not going to leave you. I have no idea of leaving you."

He leaned back and stared out of wet eyes. "What did you tell me for?"

"I wanted to be honest," said she, proudly.

"O God! Honest! Honest! Honest! O God! Honest! Honest! Honest!" Would he never stop saying it?

Then he put his head back in her lap and sobbed, horrible racking sobs, his head rubbing up and down on her knees. So had he sobbed the day his mother died. Abby could see that pinched dead face, those sunken eyes opening, to reproach her. . . . His voice cracked hoarsely, horrible to hear. A man shouldn't cry like that! She felt ashamed for him, repelled. She wanted to push his head away.

RED DAMASK

And then she began to cry.

"The Pilgrim's Chorus," she said grimly, aloud; and stopped. Gilbert almost stopped. Deep breaths shook his body.

"You'd better bathe your eyes," said Abby, calmly. "It's almost time for lunch."

Gilbert stumbled to his feet and turned away, wiping his eyes and nose.

Abby got up and looked down at her dress. It was black taffeta and Gilbert's tears had spotted it. "I'd better change."

Upstairs in her room she unfastened it and watched it fall with a hard swish-h-h, silken crags at her feet. She picked it up and put it on a chair.

She sat down at the dressing table and took the hairpins out of her hair. Suddenly she met her own eyes in the mirror. Dry, dulled eyes they were, in reddened lids. She looked beaten, but Gilbert had looked worse.

She couldn't get his cracked hoarse sobbing out of her ears; and curiously, Mike Heron's voice echoed, too, flattened, the way it sounded when he said, "This is final?" over the telephone. Usually his voice was so full of life. And Gilbert. "I'd like to get some exercise before lunch." How placid he had been then, how content!

"I've been honest," Abby told herself, proudly. Why didn't she feel proud? She didn't feel at all, but her brain murmured, "What good has your honesty done? What of it?"—Like a refrain, a refrain she'd heard before, years ago on her honeymoon at Snug Harbor:

You were happy,
So was Gilbert,
Before the confessional,
What good did it do?

Only this time she hadn't been happy.

RED DAMASK

There was a knock at the door.

"Lunch is served, Mrs. Ware."

At Snug Harbor she didn't go down to lunch or dinner. She stayed in her room and went over things that had happened, and was miserable. What good did that do?

"All right, Sigrid, I'll be down in a moment," she said aloud.

She went to the closet to get a dress, and stopped, thinking, one hand on the old-fashioned carved brass knob. Wasn't it funny the way always she'd done everything she'd been taught was right, and nearly always it had turned out to be wrong for her? She'd had high standards and she'd lived up to them. Well, what of it? Everything seemed fuzzy. She'd wanted to be good. Was she good? She didn't know. What was being good?

She pulled down that brown dress she'd worn to Rock Creek Park with Matthew Heron. It was on the first hanger because it had just come back from the cleaner. How could she wear it now? She stared at her hands with a sort of passive wonder as they went up to clasp the tan satin collar around from the shoulder to the front. She went over to the mirror to see if she'd fastened it right, and saw herself again. What a different self she was, in this same dress, and only eight days had passed. . . . She did look beaten, with those dark circles under her eyes, those drawn lips in a wan, drawn face. But she didn't feel beaten. She felt only a meager comfort in every familiar mechanical act.

There was another knock at the door.

"Aren't you c-coming down to lunch, Abby?" asked Gilbert, with a quaver in his voice.

"I'll be down in a minute," Abby answered, evenly.

Yes, she'd go down to lunch and they'd sit across the table and talk about the war and the weather and Donna's visit next

RED DAMASK

week, so that Sigrid, the waitress, wouldn't notice anything. Hypocrites. Were they hypocrites? She didn't know what they were.

Well, Mother said you lived on in your children's lives. But how could she live in Jojo's life? Now she could see that Jojo would be different, almost alien. But Philip was all hers, such a pale thin Philip that a pang of anxiety shot through the hollow hardness in her chest. She would be glad to get back to New York and Dr. Giles. Glad? How could she be glad? Weren't things fuzzy . . . ?

On the stair landing she noticed dust on the window seat. Invariably there was some corner in a house that nobody felt responsible for. She'd tell Sigrid, or wasn't it the useful maid's work? She dreaded telling the useful maid. But Mother and most women she knew, except Donna, seemed to enjoy giving orders to servants. How different people were! And yet they were expected to be and do alike. By whom? For what? She didn't know.

She opened the dining-room door.

Gilbert didn't meet her eyes. "Abby, there's a leak in the front hall, upstairs," he said, somewhat shakily. "Have you got that agent's telephone number?"

Life went on.

THE END

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pages contain
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